

May 21, 2008

## Sarasota County marks first summer-restricted season for new fertilizer ordinance

Nearly nine months after a landmark vote to adopt its fertilizer and landscape management ordinance, Sarasota County is approaching its first officially restricted season for fertilizer application. Beginning June 1 through Sept. 30, no fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorous may be used on lawns or plants. The ordinance applies to private residents and professional landscape companies.

Since the ordinance passed Aug. 27, 2007, 767 landscapers and approximately 150 residents have been trained in best management practices for fertilizer application. All training participants receive a numbered certificate and wallet card. Professional landscapers are also issued decals to display on company vehicles and trailers.

"This is an exciting time for Sarasota," said Jack Merriam, manager of Sarasota County Water Resources. "We have already seen examples of how homeowners and professionals are successfully complying with our fertilizer and landscape management ordinance while at the same time maintaining the quality of their landscaping."

Sarasota County's fertilizer ordinance, which has inspired similar ordinances across the state, requires that outside the restricted season, fertilizers applied to turf and landscape plants shall contain no less than 50 percent slow-release nitrogen. It prohibits fertilizer application within 10 feet from the edge of any pond, stream, water course, lake, canal or designated wetland, unless existing regulations are more stringent.

The ordinance also recommends a voluntary six-foot low maintenance zone from the water's edge of any pond, stream, water course, lake, canal, wetland, designated wetland or the top of a seawall. This zone would be planted and managed to minimize the need for fertilization, watering and mowing.

This new ordinance does not apply to:

- Newly established turf or landscape plants for the first 60 days after installation or planting
- Farms operating under the Right to Farm Act
- Pastures that contain grazing livestock (exempt from slow-release nitrogen only)
- Golf courses, which shall follow Best Management Practices established by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Failure to comply with the new ordinance could result in fines of up to \$500 per violation.

For more information about Sarasota County's fertilizer ordinance or certification requirements, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for Water Resources or visit [www.scgov.net](http://www.scgov.net), click on County A-Z and select Fertilizer Management.