

Fertilizer needs may be determined by first conducting a [soil test](#). The results will explain the proper ratio of N-P-K (Nitrogen – Phosphorus - Potassium) to consider in your fertilization application along with any other necessary amendments.

Synthetic (“chemical”) fertilizers are typically chemically-treated salt pellets produced in a petroleum-intensive process, and are not recommended since they are designed to work with pesticides and damage the very soil biology required by the turf to maintain its sustainability. Synthetic fertilizers will include an herbicide or insecticide in certain product formulations. Synthetic fertilizers can lead to weak, shallow-rooted turf which is more prone to thatch and browning without increased watering which in turn can increase fungus issues. Synthetic fertilizers provide a quick, artificial stimulus to the turf inviting insects interested in feeding on this ripe new growth. Synthetic fertilizers are also highly water soluble, so the nutrients intended for the lawn tend to wash-out quickly and enter the water supply causing unintended algae growth.

Organic fertilizers (other than [sewage sludge or “biosolids” products](#)) are recommended. Organic fertilizers work indirectly by building the soil with organic matter which in turn feeds the turf. Organic fertilizers are a slower-acting, less water soluble way of building soil nutrient levels and soil biology which in turn motivates a deep-rooted sustainable turf when coupled with a once-weekly 1-inch watering approach. Deeper turf roots imply less watering needs and a sturdier turf with greater resistance to insects and weeds.

Look on the packaging of the organic fertilizer you are considering to make sure it is “OMRI Listed”. [OMRI](#) (the Organic Materials Review Institute) represents the leading independent standards body for organic materials and fertilizers.

Leave lawn clippings in the lawn – this will provide about 25% of any fertilizer needs. Some mowers have a mulching feature which is ideal for more quickly allowing lawn clippings to breakdown.