

LICENSING AND REGULATIONS FOR PESTICIDE APPLICATORS

Before you hire a lawn care service, ask the following questions:

■ **Is the company licensed through the Michigan Department of Agriculture?**

State law requires licenses for companies applying pesticides (including herbicides, insecticides, and rodenticides). When hiring a service, ask for the license number.

- **What is the target pest(s) and the pesticides to be used?** Michigan Regulation 37 requires contractors to provide customers with written information about pesticide applications no later than the time of application. Required information includes: (1) name, address, and telephone of the service provider; (2) full name of the applicator; (3) a general description of the target pest(s) to be controlled; (4) a list of the pesticides applied; (5) the time and date of the application; and (6) any precautionary warnings.

After a pesticide application, a sign should be posted on the lawn. State regulation requires that a 4" x 5" green and white sign be posted.

To review additional regulatory requirements see: www.michigan.gov/mda.



To report possible violations:

Michigan Department of Agriculture,
Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division,
800-292-3939

For complaints about Business Practices:

Better Business Bureau, 248-223-9400
Michigan Consumer Protection Office,
Office of the Attorney General, Lansing,
Michigan, 517-373-1104

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PESTICIDE QUESTIONS?

CONTACT NPIC
National Pesticide Information Center
npic.orst.edu

Call toll-free 1-800-858-7378
6:30 am – 4:30 pm Pacific Time,
7 days a week
Or e-mail npic@ace.orst.edu

**NPIC provides objective, science-based
chemical, health and environmental
information about pesticides.**

This free service helps citizens:

- Understand the technical/chemical information on labels
- Assess toxicity and risks
- Explore possible alternatives
- Learn about safe-use practices
- Identify the signs of pesticide poisoning
- Obtain general information on pesticide regulations

*NPIC is a cooperative effort between
Oregon State University and the
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.*

Healthy Lawn Care Program For Watershed Protection

A Guide To Selecting A Lawn Service

*Brochure prepared by SOCWA
(Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority)
in cooperation with the
Michigan Green Industry Association and the
Healthy Lawns and Gardens Technical Advisory Committee*



WHY BE CONCERNED?

Rain and melting snow carry small amounts of oil, grease, soil, debris, and other pollutants to rivers, lakes, and wetlands. Lawn fertilizer and pesticides are among the pollutants that have been found in storm water runoff.

Lawn service providers throughout Southeast Michigan are being asked to minimize fertilizers and pesticides – but chemical use reduction depends on customer interest. This brochure will help local residents find lawn care services that meet their own goals – and protect water quality.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT RECOMMENDED LAWN CARE PRACTICES

www.socwa.org/lawn_and_garden.htm
www.turf.msu.edu/lawn
www.msuturfweeds.net



Selecting A Lawn Care Service: Questions To Ask Yourself

- 1. What are your goals?** Would you like to protect water quality? Are you concerned about exposure to lawn pesticides?
- 2. Are you willing to following recommended mowing practices and leave the grass at a 3" height after cutting?**
- 3. Are you interested in an organic fertilizer?** Some companies offer both an organic fertilizer option as well as a synthetic fertilizer option... while some specialize in one only.
- 4. Are a few weeds in your lawn acceptable?** Are you willing to dig a few weeds by hand?
- 5. Are you interested in a "rescue operation" to clear out excessive weeds and/or to rejuvenate the lawn BEFORE starting a basic healthy lawn care program?**

Compare services and check customer references before hiring a service.

SLOW-RELEASE NITROGEN FERTILIZERS FOR WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

Options for slow-release nitrogen fertilizers (with 40% or more slow-release nitrogen) include NATURAL ORGANIC products as well as COATED, SYNTHETIC products. By definition, natural organic fertilizers contain nutrients which are naturally-occurring or naturally-derived. If you are interested in a natural organic option, ask for it specifically.

Both the natural organic products and the coated, synthetic products release nutrients over an extended period of time. Slow-release products minimize the "quick flush" of grass growth that may occur following fertilizer applications.

In contrast, quick-release fertilizers are generally high in nitrogen and soluble in water. Rain and snow can wash these products into storm drains, rivers, and lakes.

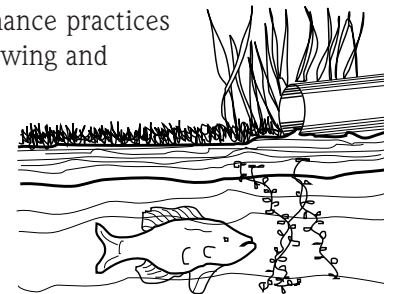
Fertilizers with significant amounts of phosphorus are also a concern, since excess phosphorus causes algae to grow and suffocates aquatic organisms. Some natural organic products, as well as some synthetic products, exceed the recommended threshold for low or no phosphorus.

HEALTHY LAWN CARE PROGRAM FOR WATERSHED PROTECTION

A "one size fits all" approach to lawn care can result in unnecessary quantities of fertilizer and herbicides. Request *The Healthy Lawn Care Program for Watershed Protection*.

The basic components of the program are as follows:

- **An initial on-site consultation** before recommending fertilizer and/or pesticides.
- **Soil nutrient tests** offered to all new customers.
- **Slow-release nitrogen fertilizer.** Some companies offer natural organic fertilizers while others offer synthetic fertilizers with 40% or more slow-release or controlled-release nitrogen, such as water-insoluble nitrogen (W.I.N.)
- **Low-phosphorus or no-phosphorus fertilizer for most circumstances.** Low-phosphorus fertilizers have a nitrogen-to-phosphorus ratio of 5 to 1 or greater. Exceptions to the low-phosphorus recommendation are (1) new lawns (seed or sod); and (2) additional phosphorus as justified by soil nutrient test results.
- **Fertilizer quantities** of either 2, 3 or 4 pounds of nitrogen applied on the lawn over the growing season – depending on the type of turf, and other site considerations.
- **Pesticide options**, depending on the goals and views of the customer. Examples of pesticides are herbicides (weed control) and insecticides (insect control). Options which may be offered include:
 - Zero pesticide program
 - Spot-treatment for weeds (NOT weed-and-feed)
 - One-time "rescue operation" for weed control
- **Advice to the customer** on maintenance practices such as mowing and watering.



SERVICE AGREEMENT REMINDER

When you receive the proposed service agreement (signed by the company's representative), review it carefully. The service agreement should set forth the approximate schedule and frequency of services, all fees, and other pertinent product information.



SINCE YOU ARE THE CUSTOMER, YOU CAN AND SHOULD CHOOSE THE SERVICES YOU WISH FOR YOUR LAWN.

- *Can fertilizer quantities and numbers of applications be reduced?*
- *Why are pesticides needed?*

LAWN SERVICES ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY FOR ENDORSEMENT UNDER THE HEALTHY LAWN PROGRAM.

For a list of companies endorsed by the Michigan Green Industry Association telephone 248-646-4992 or see www.landscape.org, "contractor" section.

