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**New Jersey's 2011 Law  
Regulating Turfgrass Fertilizer  
Applications**

Salvatore Mangiafico

Rutgers Cooperative Extension  
Environmental and Resource Management Agent

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New Jersey Agriculture  
Experiment Station

This presentation will be about New Jersey's 2011 law regulating fertilizer applications to turfgrass.

## Slide 2

### New turf fertilizer law

- “An act concerning the application, sale, and use of fertilizer”, signed into law in 2011
- Statewide
- Regulates application of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers to turf areas
- Affects homeowners and professional landscapers
- Applies to private homes, commercial properties, and public areas
- Professional landscapers who apply fertilizers will need to be trained and certified



Photo: Salvatore Mangiafico,  
Rutgers Cooperative Extension

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Source: [http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/PL10/112\\_.PDF](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/PL10/112_.PDF)

In 2011, New Jersey passed legislation regulating the application of fertilizers to turfgrass areas. [The full text of the law is available at [http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/PL10/112\\_.PDF](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/PL10/112_.PDF)].

The law applies statewide, and regulates the application of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers to turf areas. It affects both homeowners and professional landscapers, and applies to private homes, commercial properties, and public areas.

Professional landscapers who apply fertilizers will need to be trained and certified. The process for this certification is still being developed, as of 2011. Most likely, educational materials will be available to those seeking certification and they will need to pass an exam. Certified professionals will likely need to take additional courses with continuing education credits to maintain their certification, or have the option of being re-tested every, probably, four years.

Municipal and county employees or anyone else who applies fertilizers to turf areas as part of their jobs are considered professional landscapers in this legislation.

Presumably, the list of certified landscapers will be made available to municipalities who wish to ensure that landscapers working in their jurisdictions are in fact certified.

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**New fertilizer regulations**

- does not apply to gardens and beds
- sod farms and agriculture are exempted
- golf courses are exempted also except that they must have their fertilizer applicators certified



Photo: Salvatore Mangiafico,  
Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Source: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>

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The law is specifically about turf areas and does not apply to gardens and flower beds.

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Sod farms and other agriculture are exempted.

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Golf courses are exempted as well, with the exception that they must have their fertilizer applicators certified.

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**New fertilizer regulations**

- Several poor application practices are prohibited by the law.

Nitrogen or phosphorus fertilizer cannot be applied:

- during heavy rains or to saturated soils
- to impervious surfaces such as driveways and sidewalks
- to frozen ground
- before March 1 or after November 15, with the cutoff date for professional applicators extended to December 1




Photo: Salvatore Mangiafico,  
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Source: <<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>>

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**New fertilizer regulations**

- within 25 feet of a waterbody (with exceptions for using a drop-spreader, and for rescue applications by a professional)




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Source: <<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>>

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- or within 25 feet of a waterbody.

There are exceptions to this stipulation. This distance can be decreased to 10 feet when using a drop spreader or other precise application method. Furthermore, a professional applicator can apply fertilizers to a buffer area for a "rescue treatment."

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**New fertilizer regulations**

- Limits on phosphorus fertilizer applications

Applying phosphorus fertilizer is allowed only if it is prescribed by a soil test within the last three years.

However, the law allows exceptions for the establishment of new vegetation, the repair or re-establishment of turf areas, and when liquid fertilizer is being applied directly to plant roots.

As a further exception, phosphorus may be applied as an organic fertilizer providing the rate of phosphorus application does not exceed 0.25 pounds per 1000 square-feet.




Photo: Salvatore Mangiafico,  
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Source: <<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>>

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As a further exception, phosphorus may be applied as an organic fertilizer providing the rate of phosphorus application does not exceed 0.25 pounds per 1000 square-feet.

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(It's not clear if the 0.25 pounds is a yearly rate or a per-application rate. In many cases, the application rate of organic fertilizers will be limited by the allowed rates for nitrogen application.)

## Slide 7

**New fertilizer regulations**

- Limits on nitrogen fertilizer applications

Homeowners

- may apply up to 3.2 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square-feet per year,
- with no more than 0.9 pounds per 1000 square-feet in any one application
- the nitrogen in the fertilizer must contain at least 20% slow release nitrogen
- any application cannot exceed 0.7 pounds per 1000 square-feet of water-soluble nitrogen




Photo: Salvatore Mangiafico,  
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Source: <<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>>

Limits on nitrogen applications vary somewhat between homeowners and professional applicators.

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Non-professionals:

- may apply up to 3.2 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square-feet per year,
- with no more 0.9 pounds per 1000 square-feet in any one application
- the nitrogen in the fertilizer must contain at least 20% slow release nitrogen
- any application cannot exceed 0.7 pounds per 1000 square-feet of water-soluble nitrogen

## Slide 8

**New fertilizer regulations**

- Limits on nitrogen fertilizer applications

Professional applicators

- may apply up to 4.25 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square-feet per year,
- with no more than 1 pound per 1000 square-feet in any one application.
- the nitrogen in the fertilizer must contain at least 20% slow release nitrogen
- any application cannot exceed 0.7 pounds per 1000 square-feet of water-soluble nitrogen.




Photo: Salvatore Mangiafico,  
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Source: <<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>>

### Professional applicators:

- may apply up to 4.25 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square-feet per year,
- with no more than 1 pound per 1000 square-feet in any one application.
- the nitrogen in the fertilizer must contain at least 20% slow release nitrogen
- any application cannot exceed 0.7 pounds per 1000 square-feet of water-soluble nitrogen.

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### New fertilizer regulations

- Fertilizer products and labeling
  - Lawn fertilizers will contain no P, except when labeled for allowed uses
  - Labels will have to follow a standard format
  - Application directions will be written to conform with law



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Source: <<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>>

The law also has stipulations about fertilizer products sold in the state and product labels. It's written so that if someone buys a bag of fertilizer labeled for lawn use and follows the directions, she will be in compliance with the law. Specifically,

- Lawn fertilizers will contain no P, except when labeled for allowed uses
- Labels will have to follow a standard format
- Application directions will be written to conform with law

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### New fertilizer regulations

- Pre-emption of municipal laws
  - The statewide law supersedes all municipal and county ordinances concerning the application of fertilizer to turf
  - Presumably this provision is also intended to preclude towns from passing regulations that would be more strict than the state law



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Source: <<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>>

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The intention of the state law is that it supersedes all municipal and county ordinances concerning the application of fertilizer to turf.

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Additionally this provision is also intended to preclude towns from passing regulations that are stricter than the state law.

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One of the purposes of this is to prevent professional landscapers from having to deal with local regulation that vary from one municipality to another.

**New fertilizer regulations**

- Fines
  - Civil penalties for professionals: \$500 for first offence, \$1000 after that
  - The law may be enforced by municipalities, counties, soil conservation districts, and local health agencies.

Certain actions may be taken by the state Department of Environmental Protection as well.




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Source: <<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>>

The law indicates fines for professionals who violate the law: \$500 for a first offense and up to \$1000 for subsequent offenses. There are several agencies that can enforce the law including municipalities, soil conservation districts, and health agencies. The state Department of Environmental Protection can revoke someone's certification and impose administrative fines.

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**New fertilizer regulations**

- Time for provisions taking effect

Prohibitions against applying fertilizers in the winter, to impervious surfaces, and during heavy rains take effect immediately.

Stipulations about fertilizer formulation and labeling take effect after two years.

And the rest of the law takes effect after one year.




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Source: <<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>>

Prohibitions against applying fertilizers in the winter, to impervious surfaces, and during heavy rains take effect immediately (January 2011). Stipulations about fertilizer formulation and labeling take effect after two years (January 2013). And the rest of the law takes effect after one year (January 2012).

**NJAES Websites for homeowners and others**

<http://snyderfarm.rutgers.edu/njfertilizerlawguide.html>

- FAQs about the law
- Spreader calibration
- Fertilizer application calculator



The collage shows three screenshots from the NJAES website. The top right screenshot is a 'FAQ' page titled 'Answers for Homeowners About the 2011 NJ Fertilizer Law'. The bottom left screenshot is a 'FAQ' page titled 'Answers for Homeowners Calibrate Your Fertilizer Spreader' with a green grass background. The bottom right screenshot is a 'Nitrogen Fertilizer Calculator for NJ Homeowners with Established Lawns' which includes a table for inputting lawn area and fertilizer analysis.

Area (sq. ft.)	Rate (lb. N/1000 sq. ft.)	Total N (lb.)

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Rutgers has information available about the law and tools to educate homeowners and others wishing to understand the law. The Snyder Farm website, <http://snyderfarm.rutgers.edu/njfertilizerlawguide.html>, has a Quick Facts information sheet about the law, Frequently Asked Questions page, information on calibrating fertilizer spreaders, and a fertilizer calculator.

Resources for professional applicators are being developed, as of 2011.

And additional outreach efforts to educate homeowners and municipalities are planned.

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Salvatore Mangiafico

County Environmental and Resource Management Agent  
Cooperative Extension of Salem County

51 Cheney Rd, Ste. 1  
Woodstown, NJ 08098

856-769-0090

mangiafico@njaes.rutgers.edu

<http://salem.rutgers.edu/nre>



<http://salem.rutgers.edu/nre>