

# Guide to MS4

## Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System

September 2023 Edition



### Fall Fertilizing

**May was a long dry month. The official rainfall total for the month of May was 0.19 inches in Harrisburg. The lack of rain made May once of the driest months on record.**

Whether you missed fertilizing your lawn this spring due to the busyness of the family or because the dry weather made you question the effect on fertilizer, the fall is still a good time to fertilize your lawn. More important, is to fertilize that the correct ratio and just what your lawn needs. Just because you skipped the spring application doesn't mean that you should double up on the fall fertilizer to make up for it. Fertilizer application instructions should be followed closely. Never over fertilize your lawn and never fertilize within 24 hours of a rain event. Over fertilizing and fertilizing within 24 hours of a rain event can cause fertilizer to run off into the storm sewers, eventually polluting the waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

### When to Fertilize

Lawns will go dormant over the winter. Your lawn has had a long summer between children, pets, the weather and insects it is time for your lawn to take a break. Think of that fertilizer as the last meal before a deep sleep. Knowing when the best time to feed a lawn will only keep your lawn looking fabulous next spring. Fertilization should take place 6 to 8 weeks before the expected first frost. The first frost in Lower Allen Township is expected around October 16 according to the Old Farmer's Almanac.

### What does your lawn need?

Knowing what your lawn needs and does not need will only benefit your lawn in the future. Have you had your soil tested? Soil testing can tell you what nutrients the soil is lacking and can help you choose the correct fertilizer for your lawn. Many soils contain Phosphorous making the addition of Phosphorous in your fertilizer unnecessary. When reading the numbers on fertilizer, the center number is the Phosphorous number. These 3 numbers are called the NPK ratio; Nitrogen, Phosphorous, and Potassium.

### Alternatives to Fertilizer

Choosing an alternative to fertilizer for your lawn depends on the needs of your lawn. Does your lawn need Nitrogen, which encourages leaf growth. Mulching your grass clippings can provide an excellent source of Nitrogen. If Potassium is needed, try a home composting system enriched with banana peels or a banana peel water solution. For increased Phosphorous naturally consider bone meal, fish meal, or animal manure.