



Manatee County Adopts a Fertilizer Ordinance

Manatee County released the final language of the recently passed fertilizer ordinance. It is located here: <http://www.mymanatee.org/dms/departments/natural-resources/fertilizer-ordinance-archive/Manatee-Co--Final-FertilizerOrd-11-21/Manatee%20Co.%20Final%20Fertilizer%20Ord%2011.21.pdf>

One local newspaper article (<http://ow.ly/52AAU>) said “Manatee fertilizer issue falls flat” and calls the ordinance ‘watered down,’ the fact is that this ordinance is one of the toughest in the state. The Manatee ordinance closely follows that of Pinellas County except that our commissioners decided against having a ban on fertilizer sales during the summer.

One requirement of the Manatee ordinance is training. The certification program mandated is a 2-tier system. Fertilizer applicators must complete the GI-BMP certification program. **All other employees** of lawn and landscape companies, except clerical personnel, **must complete the second tier (mowing) certification**. Certificates of completion and vehicle decals will be provided.

The top-tier GI-BMP program has been in place for several years and the process is fairly clear. More information is available here: http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/professionals/BMP_overview.htm However, most of the details of the mowing certification must still be worked out.

This is my best understanding of the basics of the Manatee fertilizer ordinance:

- No application of fertilizers containing nitrogen or phosphorus to turf or landscape plants from June 1st through September 30th. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-5 (a)
- Fertilization during the rest of the year shall be applied at the lowest recommended rate according to the latest BMP manual. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-6 (a)
- No fertilizer containing phosphorus shall be applied to turf or landscape plants without evidence for deficiency by a certified lab. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-6 (b)
- No nitrogen on new turf or landscape plants for the first 30 days. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-6 (c)
- Fertilizers applied to turf and landscape plants shall contain no less than 50% slow release nitrogen. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-6 (d)

- Liquid fertilizers shall not be applied at more than 0.5 pounds/1000 sq ft. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-6 (e)
- Fertilizers shall not be applied to any impervious surface. Any fertilizers on impervious surfaces will be removed immediately, but away from storm drains and bodies of water. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-7
- Deflector shields are required on all broadcast and rotary spreaders. They must be used to avoid fertilizer granules on hard surfaces such as roads, streets, sidewalks, and surface waters. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-7 (b)
- Fertilizer must not be applied within 10 feet of the top of a bank or seawall or wetland. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-8
- Grass clippings and other debris must not be left on hard surfaces or removed in such a way that they might enter storm drains, etc. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-9
- All commercial or institutional fertilizer applicators must obtain the GI-BMP fertilizer certificate by May 23, 2012 or within 90 days of initial employment, whichever comes last. Certificates of completion and vehicle decals will be provided. Those certified must keep a copy of the certificate on them and be able to present it to any county official as needed. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-11 (a)
- All other lawn and landscape employees except clerical personnel must complete the second tier certification by November 23, 2012 or within 90 days of initial employment, whichever comes first. Certificates of completion will be provided. Those certified must keep a copy of the certificate on them and be able to present it to any county official as needed. Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-11 (b) & (c)

Does this ordinance apply to Manatee County homeowners?

Yes, except training is recommended but not required.

When does the Manatee County fertilizer ordinance go into effect?

This ordinance goes into effect immediately. However in Ord 11-21, Sec. 2-35-14 Section 4 (c) it says "To provide a reasonable period for compliance with the terms of this ordinance no enforcement proceedings shall be initiated for 365 days from the effective date [*May 24th, 2011*]; provided, however, warning notices may be issued during the implementation period." In other words enforcement will begin on May 25, 2012.

If you have questions, contact your local Extension office.

In Manatee County, call Dave Palmer (dkp205@ufl.edu) or Jennifer Glassburn at 941-722-4524. Certification classes in Manatee County are expected to start in the early fall of 2011.

For details on the Sarasota County ordinance, or certification classes in Sarasota, contact Angelo Randaci or Bob Mertens at (941) 861-5000.