

Comments from Joe Welch – Middleton Lawn & Pest Control

Our industry and my company share your concerns of the potential impact of fertilizer on our waterways.

- Using deflector shields on our fertilizer spreaders has been our practice since 1984.
- Removing fertilizer from impervious surfaces has been strict company policy and practice since 1986.
- Unfertilized buffer zones have been company policy and practice since 1990.
- Phosphorus free dry fertilizer has been used for all our lawn applications since 1996.
- We were participants in the creation of the Greens Industry Best Management Practices Manual in 2000.

It seems that the perception of our industry by many observers is that we apply outrageous amounts of fertilizer to achieve an outrageous green color. What they fail to recognize is that fertilizer is a controllable expense.

In addition to the direct costs, over application of fertilizer results in more pest issues such as increased weeds, insects and disease. Over application also results in an unhappy customer due to excessive growth and excessive mowing requirements. The ability to create an attractive lawn and to make money at the same time is a very delicate balance.

As with so many things we do, the only way to perform the treatment in a cost effective manner is to apply the right amount...no more, no less.

- Our technicians are trained to walk a particular speed while making an application.
- They are taught to calibrate their spreader openings to within a fraction of a millimeter using a feeler gauge tool.
- The daily usage of all fertilizer and pest control products by technicians is closely monitored to ensure they are doing the job properly and within the strict guidelines of standards for product use.
- It is a waste of money to apply fertilizer to impervious surfaces. If using deflector shields reduces our fertilizer usage by just 1 pound per lawn, it increases our profits annually by about \$13,000.
- If our technicians applied just an extra 1/2 pound of fertilizer 1000 sq. ft of lawn serviced it would cost our company about \$243,000 annually.
- Our fertilizer application schedules consider the temperature, precipitation and seasonal growth habits of the plants we are fertilizing. Nutrient sources are chosen for optimal plant use. Fertilizer that is leached out or runs off does not have benefit to the turf. It is a waste of money.
- Environmental concerns are not contradictory to our financial concerns, they are parallel.

Please be aware that the professional lawn care industry is very mindful of our fertilizer use, not only for the potential environmental impacts, but also for the impact that improper use would have on our bottom line.