



STATE ISSUE: **Fertilizer Ordinances**

POSITION: FNGLA supports the development and adoption of a consistent statewide fertilizer ordinance for commercial and residential lawns and landscapes. It must be: (1) based on sound horticultural science; (2) practical and enforceable; (3) protective of water resources; (4) recognizes and encourages the use of industry certified professionals; and, (5) contains a strong public education component.

BACKGROUND: Florida’s tourist economy is fueled by white sandy beaches, unique natural resources and eye-catching creative landscapes. Yet, as Florida’s population increases so do the pressures and potential impacts on Florida’s resources. As a result, many local governments have responded in sometimes “knee-jerk” fashion by developing and adopting ordinances based more on emotion than science. While FNGLA respects the authority of local governments to develop local ordinances, it seems short-sighted and counter-intuitive for every local government to develop what amounts to a hodgepodge of inconsistent fertilizer rules and regulations. Moreover, the target of many of the local ordinances has been directed misguidedly at businesses and industry professionals who are properly trained and experienced in fertilizer applications. The focus should be homeowners who typically have limited or no knowledge or understanding of the potential impacts of misusing fertilizer, water and other lawn and landscape inputs.

FNGLA strongly believes local governments should look to the State of Florida to provide the necessary science and regulations to protect against potential water quality impacts. In the alternative, local governments should embrace the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) “Model Landscape Ordinance” as well as “Florida-Friendly Landscape Irrigation Design Standards.” Furthermore, local governments should allow the recently adopted Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services “Urban Turf Rule.” This rule mandates the use of low-phosphorus and no phosphorus fertilizers, limits the amount of nitrogen which can be applied in a calendar year; and, mandates a percentage of slow-release or controlled release nutrients in each bag of fertilizer.

FNGLA believes the recognition and use of trained or certified industry professionals, as well as the aggressive education of the general public, is critical to the long term success and behavioral changes necessary to mitigate the potential impacts from fertilized Florida lawns and landscapes. Industry professionals who earn certifications should be recognized and exempt from any locally mandated training programs. There are industry certifications, such as the “*FNGLA Certified Horticultural Professional*” program, which is recognized by DEP and all five of Florida’s water management districts as meeting or exceeding applicable Best Management Practices, which can be utilized for this purpose. Local ordinances should also embrace individuals either trained via DEP’s “*Green Industry Best Management Practices*” or licensed by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Local governments should also work actively with their county extension agents to promote and facilitate consumer training of the general public through the University of Florida/IFAS “*Florida Yards and Neighborhoods*” program.

FNGLA supports a multi-faceted, cooperative approach at a state wide level. This includes local governments, state agencies, the scientific community and affected industries as such will help to ensure the adoption and implementation of practical, science-based and enforceable landscape fertilizer rules. In turn, these rules will protect water quality, educate the public and provide for the design and installation of creative, environmentally sustainable Florida-friendly landscapes.