



PRODUCTS FOR YOUR NATURAL LAWN (cont.)

ANIMAL BY-PRODUCTS

Blood Meal

A by-product of animal processing, blood meal is an excellent source of nitrogen. Mix it with your compost to speed up the decomposition process. Do not mix blood meal with seedlings. Use it only in small amounts to avoid plant burn and be sure to activate the fertilizer with a basic watering.

Bone Meal

Bone meal is a top natural source of phosphorous. Unlike some fertilizers, bone meal works especially well with root systems. This is a slow release fertilizer that should be raked into the soil either at the start of the growing season or a few weeks before planting. Never use products high in phosphorus unless you are seeding a new lawn or responding to a soil test.

Fish Products

Fish products have historically been used for livestock feed and are a more recent addition to the natural soil fertilizers. Fish products come in a variety of forms, such as fish emulsion, fish meal, fish powder or liquidized fish. Some products are made from leftover fish processing waste, and other products come from fish farms that function just to produce fish meal. Nutrient release time depends on the type of fish fertilizer being used, but fish products are generally more available to plants than animal fertilizers.

Chicken Manure

Rich in potassium, nitrogen and phosphorus, chicken manure provides more nutrients than most other manures, such as cow or horse. Although considered safe, it is a good idea to handle any manure-based fertilizer with gloves.

Vermicasting

Vermicasting is essentially worm waste. Often called 'black gold,' this fertilizer comes directly from worms. Vermicasting is a unique fertilizer because it makes use of already present, but previously unavailable soil nutrients. Unlike other soil activators, vermicasting makes nutrients immediately available to plants after application.

MINERALS

Lime

Lawns, much like the human body, have an ideal pH level. Nutrients, in effect, are more available between the pH levels 6.3 through 6.8. Lime is especially useful in reaching and keeping a perfect pH level on overly acidic lawns that have a pH reading below this given range.

A soil test will determine the appropriate type and amount of lime to apply. Although lime can be applied any time of year, it works best when used in the fall because winter weather helps to drive lime into the ground. Caution: because lime is a respiratory irritant be sure to use lime pellets, not powder. The liming of lawns takes a number of applications and growing seasons before the pH level changes.

Sulfur

Like lime, this mineral also helps to balance pH levels. Unlike lime, sulfur should be used to lower an 'alkaline' pH soil reading that is over 7. Use this mineral after performing a soil test to determine the correct application amount. Adding sulfur to change the pH level will take a number of growing seasons and applications until the pH level changes.

Always read the label instructions or directions carefully before using any fertilizer, and be sure to connect your choice of fertilizer to recommendations provided by a soil test. Remember: transitioning your lawn can take time, so patience is the most valuable thing you can apply to your lawn.

