

FERTILIZE AFTER IT RAINS

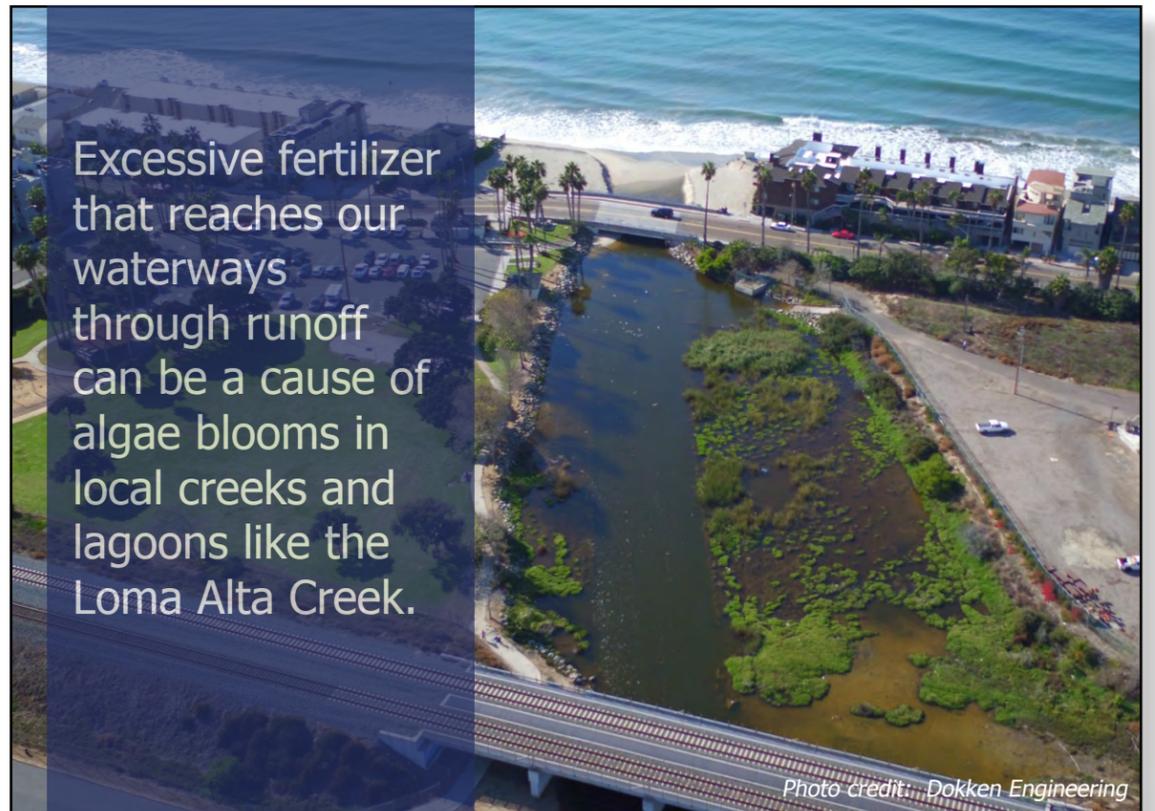
The rainy season in Southern California is October through May each year. Oceanside residents are fortunate enough to have warm sunny days after it rains. This allows gardening and landscape maintenance to be done year-round. Some maintenance activities, such as fertilizer application, can cause problems to the local environment when not timed properly. Your help is needed to protect Oceanside's water resources while also maintaining beautiful landscapes.

When applying fertilizer, apply it after it rains, not before it rains.

Some people believe that when rain is in the forecast, they should apply fertilizer to their lawns to "water it down" into the soil, providing nutrients to the roots of the plants. This is far from the truth. If fertilizer is applied the day before a storm, plants will not have enough time to absorb the fertilizer before the rain washes it down the storm drain and into our rivers, creeks and ocean. This is because most conventional fertilizers are designed to release nutrients to the soil slowly over time.

Excessive fertilizer that reaches our waterways through runoff can be a cause of algae blooms in local creeks and lagoons like Buena Vista Lagoon and the Loma Alta Creek. Algae blooms in surface waters are detrimental to wildlife and water quality. When the algae dies, the decomposition process depletes the oxygen in the water, stressing the aquatic wildlife. Additionally, algae blooms are unsightly and can result in foul odors, affecting recreation and the natural beauty of creeks in Oceanside.

The best way for plants to uptake nutrients and ensure that fertilizer is not washed off landscapes is to apply fertilizer 72 hours after it rains. If the manufacturer directions state to water the plants after applying the fertilizer to prevent plant burning or other issues, then use your own irrigation system – not the rain. You can do this by hand watering or using your in-ground irrigation



system, as long as no water runs off your property and enters the curb, gutter or storm drain.

A better alternative to chemical fertilizers is the use of compost products.

Did you know that Oceanside's green waste material collected from residential landscapes is hauled to the El Corazon Compost facility? Agriservice, the company that operates the compost facility, turns that green waste into humic compost, composted mulch and compost tea. These compost and mulch products improve soil condition and reduce the need for fertilizer and pesticides, and help to prevent polluted runoff when properly applied. **Oceanside residents can obtain free compost products for use in their landscapes during designated facility hours.**

More information can be found at www.agriserviceinc.com under the "El Corazon" tab.

A quick summary of tips for proper fertilizer and compost application:

1. When applying fertilizer, apply it after it rains, not before.
2. Always follow the manufacturer's directions on the quantity and frequency of application.
3. When possible, consider using compost mulch instead of applying synthetic fertilizers.
4. If you have a landscape contractor that takes care of your landscape, please share this information with them.

You can help protect water quality in Oceanside's waterways by applying fertilizer after it rains and improve the soil and health of your plants by using compost products. Learn more tips about environmental protection by visiting www.GreenOceanside.org.

