

## Help! My lawn is turning brown!

### How to get your lawn ready for its winter beauty sleep

**Fertilize early, but not often.** Nitrogen fertilizer makes your grass grow. If those tender new blades get hit by the first frost, that sets the stage for some stubborn brown patches in your lawn next spring. The solution? Fertilize just once in the fall, in early October.

**Don't feed the patch.** Think a second application of fertilizer will green up your lawn? Just the opposite. Fertilizing in late fall can feed the fungus *Rhizoctonia* and lead to "brown patch disease." And if you fertilize yet again in hopes of reversing the brown? *Rhizoctonia* wins again.

**Go slow.** Fertilizer that is at least 50% slow-release (or timed release) nitrogen is better for your yard and your pocket book. And from October through May, it's the only kind of fertilizer you can use in Tampa, Pinellas County and Manatee County.

**Add some potassium.** Potassium helps lawns absorb water during the dry season. Check to see if your fertilizer has it. But skip the phosphorus; the Tampa Bay area is naturally rich in phosphorus so you don't need to throw more on your yard.

**Fertilizer will not make concrete grow.** OK, so you knew that. But when fertilizer is left on a driveway, sidewalk or other hard surface, it has just one place to go — down the street and into the nearest lake or bay. Sweeping up the spills protects fishing, boating and other water fun.

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