

**Q: Why do the guaranteed levels of nutrients vary amongst fertilizers?**

**A:** Various factors are involved in the levels of nutrients suitable for a given application. Method of delivery (spray on leaves, liquid, solid), rate of delivery (immediate delivery vs. time-release products), time of year and type of plant all affect the needs of the plant. Also, of course, the availability of nutrients in the soil will determine what needs to be added.

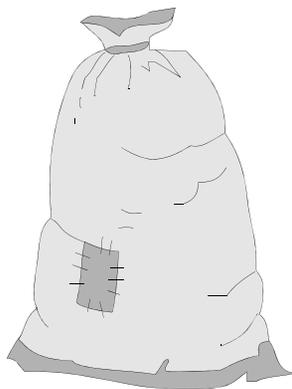
**Q: Is Anhydrous Ammonia covered by the Fertilizer Law?**

**A:** There is a separate law covering anhydrous ammonia fertilizer that is also enforced by the Colorado Department of Agriculture. This act sets down the rules for the safe storing and handling of agricultural anhydrous ammonia. The same inspectors that enforce the fertilizer law enforce the anhydrous ammonia law. They make annual inspections of the tanks where anhydrous ammonia is stored.



**The Three Main Nutrients**

**N=Nitrogen**  
**P=Phosphorus**  
**K=Potassium**  
**Grade=N-P-K**



**Division Mission**

The Division of Inspection & Consumer Services (ICS) is committed to promoting consumer protection, an honest, equitable marketplace and to encouraging integrity in Agriculture.

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**Questions & Answers on the Colorado Fertilizer Law**



**Division of Inspection & Consumer Services**

[www.colorado.gov/ag/ics](http://www.colorado.gov/ag/ics)

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### Q: How does the Colorado Fertilizer Law protect consumers?

**A:** Farmers, gardeners and anyone who grows plants will likely need to make use of fertilizers to produce healthy crops & plants. To ensure that you get the product you are paying for, the Colorado Fertilizer Law requires that fertilizers be effective and properly labeled. They must have nutrient guarantees that can be verified in a lab. Packaged fertilizers must also have the name and address of the responsible party on their labels.

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### Q: Who enforces the Fertilizer Law?

**A:** There is one program administrator and one assistant in the Colorado Department of Agriculture office. Twelve inspectors inspect fertilizers in the Colorado, in addition to working for other Department of Agriculture programs (weights & measures, egg, feed, meat processor inspections).

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### Q: How is the Fertilizer Law enforced?

**A:** Companies selling fertilizers in Colorado must register their products with our office and submit labels for review. Inspectors visit businesses where fertilizers are sold, review labels for compliance with the law, and collect fertilizer samples. Samples are analyzed in our lab for the nutrients guaranteed. Fertilizers found to be out of compliance may be taken off sale.



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### Q: What is a fertilizer?

**A:** A fertilizer will have guaranteed plant nutrients. The main nutrients plants need are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). These will be guaranteed as total nitrogen (N), available phosphate (P), and soluble potash (K), respectively. The guarantees are percent by weight. More nutrients often guaranteed include calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), sulfur (S), iron (Fe) and others.

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### Q: What do the three numbers on the fertilizer bag mean?

**A:** The first number is the percent of nitrogen (N), the second number is the percent of phosphate ( $P_2O_5$ ) and the third number is the percent of potash ( $K_2O$ ). These three numbers represent the primary nutrients; known as the fertilizer grade.

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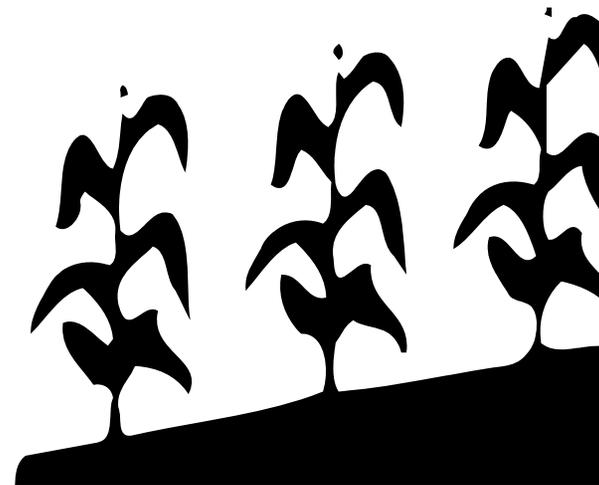
### Q: What do the different nutrients do?

**A: Nitrogen** is used particularly for new plant growth. Lawn fertilizers will have a high nitrogen guarantee since they must renew after each mowing. **Phosphorus** promotes root development and flowering. Bulbs, perennials, and newly planted trees and shrubs will need extra phosphorus. **Potassium** is necessary for the plants overall health. Resistance to disease and temperature extremes requires plenty of potassium. Winterizers contain extra potassium to prepare plants for cold weather.

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### Q: What is a “natural” fertilizer?

**A:** According to the AAPFCO, a natural fertilizer is made of materials derived from plant or animal products. Natural fertilizers may not contain synthetic materials or be substantially modified from their original forms.



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### Q: What is an “organic” fertilizer?

**A:** According to the AAPFCO, an organic fertilizer is a material that contains carbon and one or more plant nutrients. The AAPFCO (American Association of Plant Food Control Officials) is a national organization that sets down model laws, regulations and guidelines. Many states, including Colorado, make use of the AAPFCO when fertilizer laws and regulations are set down.

