

What are the 4R's of Fertilizer Application?

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Spring is fast approaching, an exciting time of year to get outside and start making plans for your flowerbeds and landscaping. The foundation of any flowerbed or landscaping project is the soil in which it grows. Adding fertilizer may increase the fertility of the soil, but there are a few best management practices you'll want to consider before starting. These practices will help you create a targeted approach to achieving your goal while avoiding excess fertilizer and nutrients from washing away and negatively impacting the environment. These are the 4R's of fertilizer application:

Right Source- Know what nutrients your plants' need, and what nutrients your soil might be lacking. A soil test can give you this information. Choose a fertilizer that contains the right nutrient combination to meet those specific needs.

Right Rate- Only apply the amount of fertilizer necessary to achieve your goals. You'll want to accurately measure the area, consider what type of plants you are planting, and consult the recommendations from your soil test. Application rates recommended on the fertilizer bag may not reflect the specific parameters of your flowerbed or landscaping and lead to an overapplication. Too much fertilizer can negatively impact the plant's root health.

Right Time- Wait until the soil has warmed and the growing season has begun. Avoid application of fertilizer right before a weather event with strong wind and rain that may wash it away.

Right Place- Ensure that fertilizer is being placed where it is needed. If fertilizer ends up on impervious surfaces, like the sidewalk or your driveway, it cannot be accessed by the plants that need it and will inevitably end up washed down the drain. This can be avoided by simply sweeping it back into the intended area.

If you are interested in obtaining a soil test, please reach out to Fairfield County's Ohio State University Extension Office at 740-653-5419 for more information.