Wilcox Nursery & LANDSCAPE

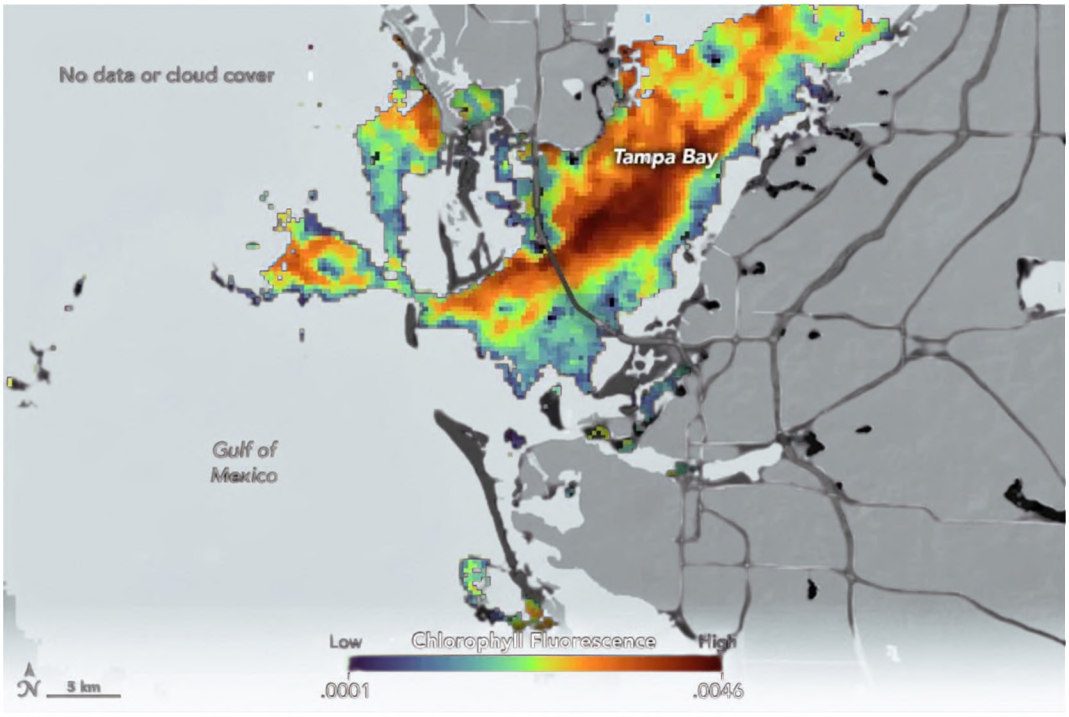
Protect the Bay from Fertilizer Runoff

The Summer Shift: From Fertilizing Plants to Feeding Soil

Every summer, Tampa Bay enters an intense season of high temperatures, rain, thunderstorms, and occasional hurricanes. From June 1 through September 30, Pinellas County prohibits the **sale** and **use** of lawn and landscape fertilizers containing nitrogen or phosphorus. This does not mean summer gardens have to go hungry, but it does mean we need to shift from fast, soluble nutrients to caring for the soil system itself. The ordinance exists because all of our yards are connected to the bay.

When fertilizer is applied incorrectly or before heavy rain, it can wash from lawns into storm drains which lead directly to local waterways. Rain that falls on roofs, driveways, lawns, sidewalks, streets, and planting beds has two basic paths, soaking into the ground or moving across the surface as stormwater runoff. Once that runoff reaches a storm drain, it does not go to a sewage treatment plant. It moves through a separate stormwater system and drains toward nearby ponds, canals, creeks, bays, and the Gulf.

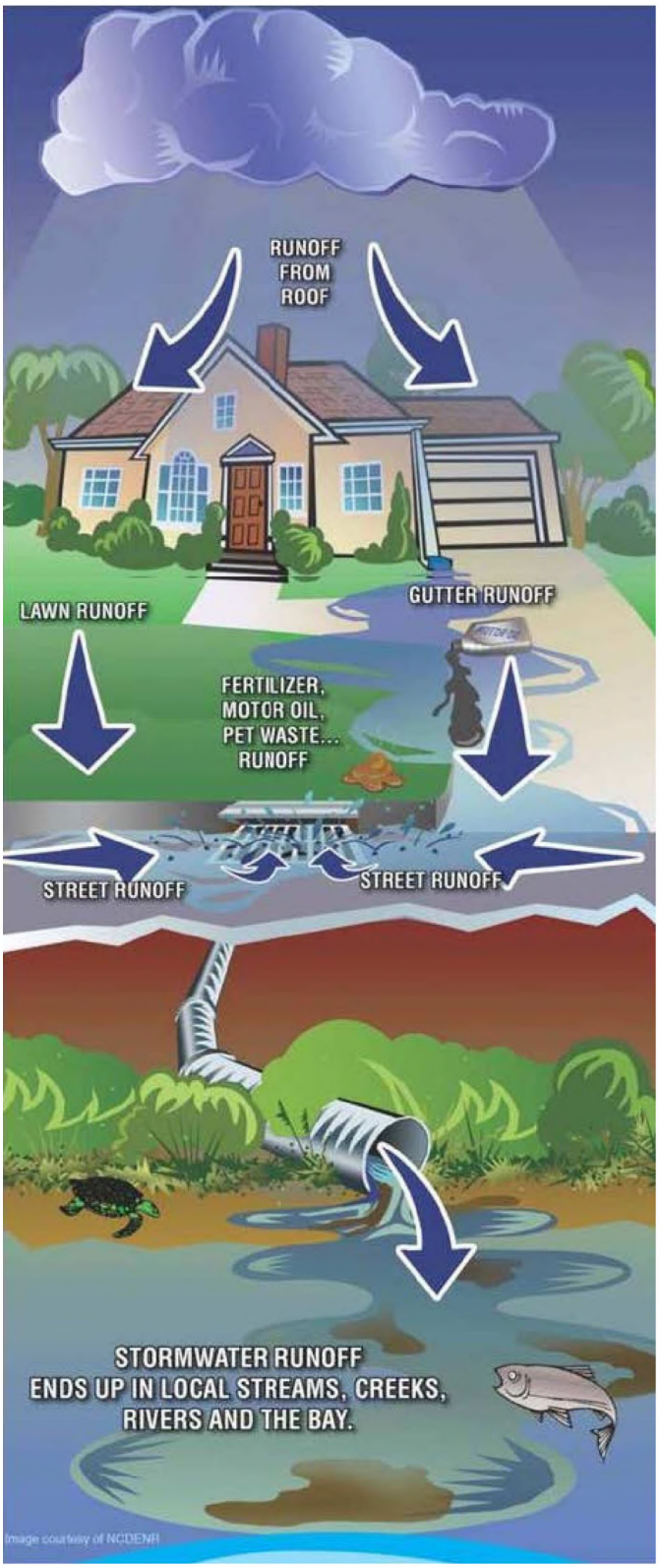
The fertilizer ban doesn't mean you can't take care of your plant health. Summer fertilizer alternatives focus on soil health and targeted nutrition without using nitrogen and phosphorus. Pinellas County still allows the sale of composts, macronutrients such as potassium, sulfur, calcium, and magnesium, and micronutrients such as iron and magnesium. At the heart of summer plant care is more attention to soil structure, organic matter, root health, and minor elements.



Chlorophyll fluorescence map from NOAA showing the location and intensity of algae growth

Information by Sidney Craig

Bay-friendly Plant Care



How your fertilizer ends up in Tampa Bay and the Gulf. pinellas.gov/stormwater-runoff

Improve Your Soil

Black Kow or **Mushroom Compost** feeds plants while improving the soil. Compost adds organic matter, helps the soil hold moisture, supports microbial life, and improves the soil's ability to retain nutrients instead of letting them wash through after every heavy rain.

For broader soil-building, we offer **COMAND Lawn & Turf** compost. It provides organic matter and beneficial microbes that support healthier soil biology, improve moisture retention, and help rebuild the physical and biological structure of depleted soil. That makes it especially useful in sandy landscapes where water and nutrients often move too quickly

Natural Energy Boost

Worm castings work in a similar but gentler way than fertilizer. They are useful when a plant needs mild support rather than a strong push. In containers, vegetable starts, herbs, annuals, and sensitive plantings, worm castings can be mixed into the soil or used as a light topdressing.

Targeted Plant Nutritional Support

Essential Minor Elements is the product to consider when plants appear to need mineral correction rather than general nitrogen feeding.

Palm Nutritional Spray contains manganese, magnesium, iron, and sulfur and is labeled for palms and other ornamentals to help prevent or correct nutritional deficiencies.

Garden Nutritional Spray is useful for yellowing foliage on ornamentals, shrubs, vegetables, and other garden plants where micronutrients are more likely to be the issue than nitrogen.