



Fertilise Wisely

HELP REDUCE NUTRIENT LEVELS IN ROEBUCK BAY

Use fertiliser wisely

Too much of the fertiliser we use on our gardens ends up in Roebuck bay! If large amounts of fertiliser are used, plants can't use all the chemicals that are released. Surplus chemicals sink into the ground and gradually seep out onto the shore and into the creeks of Roebuck Bay.

If your sprinkler system is badly designed or poorly maintained, chemicals from fertilisers may get washed onto the road. When the first rains come, they are flushed into stormwater drains which, in many suburbs, flow straight into Roebuck Bay.

Does it matter? Yes it does - because Roebuck Bay is becoming infested with a nasty algae called Lyngbya. Lyngbya grows where levels of nitrogen and phosphorus are high. It smothers sea grass beds and washes up onto beaches in thick smelly mats. Loss of sea grass impacts on creatures in the marine food chain such as dugong, turtle and fish.



Use the right fertiliser, in the right amount, at the right time and with the right amount of water.

GET IT RIGHT AND ROEBUCK BAY WILL THANK YOU!

How to use fertiliser wisely in your garden

Identify which of the plants in your garden are natives. These do not need fertiliser.

Don't fertilise your lawn until it shows symptoms of nutrient deficiency, such as yellow patches. This may not occur for many years. Use a small application of a phosphorus free fertiliser and water it in just enough to dissolve the fertiliser and allow it to be absorbed by the grass plants.

Mow your lawn regularly and leave the blades high. Don't use the catcher. The grass clippings will break down and provide organic matter back to the lawn. This means there's less need to use fertiliser.

When fertilising garden plants, use slow release organic fertiliser and apply it sparingly under the mulch. A little bit occasionally is much better than a big dose once a year. Water the fertiliser just enough for it to be absorbed into the soil.

Regularly add mulch, compost and/or material from worm farms to your garden beds so the layer is at least 5 cm thick. This will stop water evaporating and break down to provide food for your plants. Reduced watering means less nutrients seeping through the soil into ground water. A drip system under the mulch encourages deeper penetration of water into the soil.

Avoid using fertiliser if heavy rain is forecast. Don't fertilise near road verges, the foreshore, or drainage channels.

Take care when using raw animal manures. These are generally high in phosphorus. They also break down quickly encouraging nutrient losses through the soil into ground water. Composted manures are better.

If you must use a chemical fertiliser, use a complete fertiliser and apply it sparingly. Don't use more than the recommended dose on the bag. 25 grams per square metre is about half a handful for a man.

Try some alternative ideas!

- Minimise your lawn area. Extend your garden beds or have pebble, gravel or paved areas instead.
- Grow plants that are adapted to our pindan soil and local conditions. These have much lower nutrient requirements than exotic plants. Group plants with similar water, fertiliser and shade needs.
- Design your garden to harvest water. Shape garden beds into saucers rather than mounds so rain water flows into them; make hollows around new plantings to help hand watering; think about how you can use water from your laundry or outside shower on your garden