

# Make sure your lawn is well-fed

A thick full lawn that is richly green provides a safe and cushioned surface for family activities—it also spiffs up the curb appeal.

Healthy green turf will also prevent soil erosion on slopes, filter contaminants from rainwater, absorb many types of airborne pollutants and dusts, and convert carbon dioxide to oxygen, a process that helps clean the air. A natural source of air conditioning, a robust lawn will cool surface temperatures.

So what's the magic substance that will turn a thin weedy lawn into a hard-working carpet of green? Food. A well-nourished lawn not only looks better, but it works better, providing environmental benefits and fighting off weeds and insects like grubs and chinch bugs.

**Feed the lawn? With fertilizer? Isn't fertilizer like a pesticide?**

Actually, pesticides and fertilizers have little in common.

Pesticides are typically chemical preparations intended to prevent, destroy, or repel pests such as weeds and insects.

Fertilizer materials are mined from the earth, made from gases in the air, or are recycled from organic waste materials. Fertilizers support the quality and quantity of plant growth by providing elements that are essential to the plant's metabolic process.

Essential elements in fertilizers

**Nitrogen**

- the element most needed by lawns
- lawns that lack nitrogen may turn light green or yellow, and leaves may die, starting at the tips.

**Phosphate**

- assists in stimulating root growth

-phosphate deficiency in home lawns is rare, which is why lawn fertilizers have lower levels of phosphate.

**Potash**

- essential for the manufacture of sugar, starches, and proteins.

- helps plants cope with stress caused by wear, summer heat, winter cold, disease, and insect infestation. Better lawn fertilizers have higher levels of potash.

Select a fertilizer that has a balance of three main elements.

According to experts, a 4-1-2 or 3-1-2 ratio works best for lawns, e.g. 24-6-12, or organic 8-2-4. All good lawn fertilizers also contain at least 40 per cent slow release nitrogen to give long lasting greening effect between applications.

**Why just one feeding doesn't work**

Turf researchers recommend that you apply lawn food three to four times a year (at the rate recommended on the product bag) in early spring, late spring, summer and fall.

If you are a once-a-year feeder, your lawn is undernourished. Lawns may be nutrient starved, more prone to wear and damage from extreme weather, and more susceptible to weed and insect infestations.

**What's a basic pesticide-free program for my lawn?**

Give your lawn three to four applications of mineral or organic/natural fertilizer per year. Your lawn will be thick, full and healthy and will suffer less damage from higher insect populations. The grass plants will be better able to resist weed infestation, withstand hot summer drought conditions, wear and tear, and winter stresses.

—Ontario Agri Business Association



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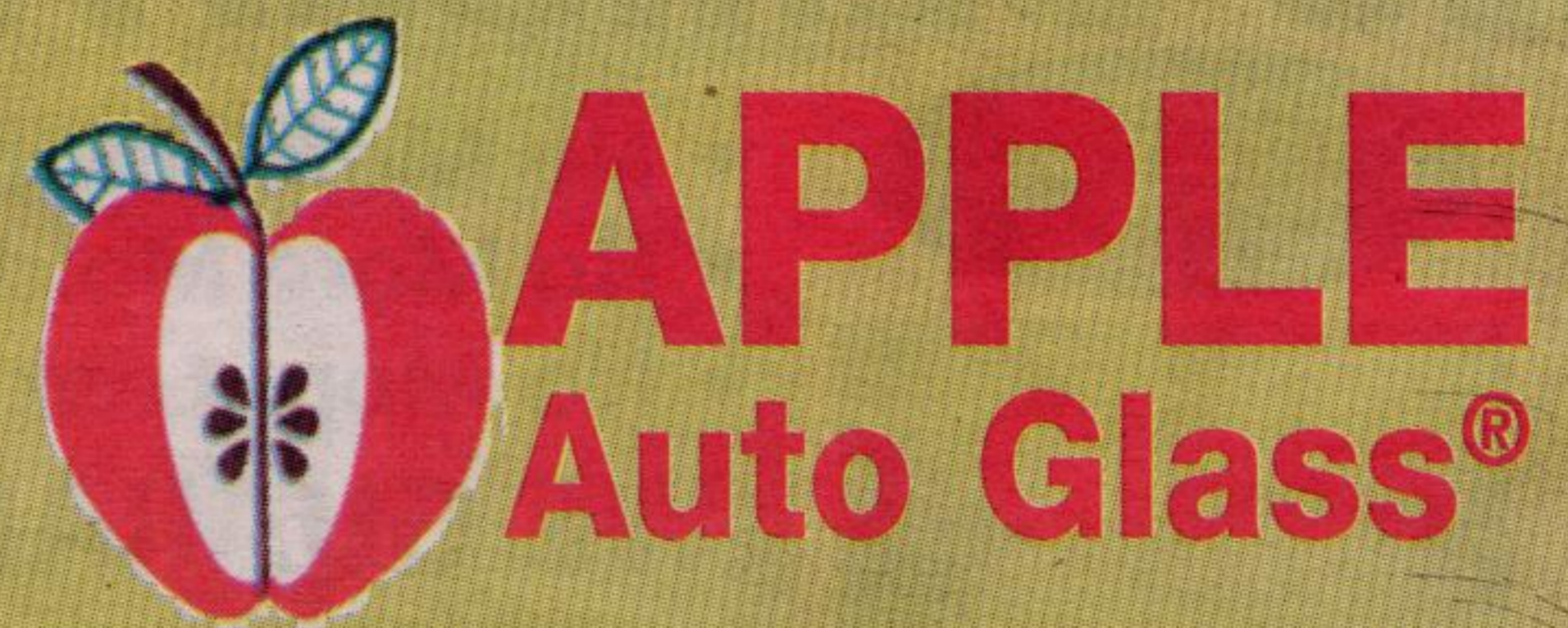
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