



Developing a Continuing Education Program for Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer Applicators

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Florida statutes 482.1562 and 403.9338 require that all commercial fertilizer applicators obtain a limited certification for urban landscape commercial fertilizer certification from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services by 1 Jan. 2014. The certification is renewed every 4 years by completing 4 h of continuing education units (CEUs) at least 90 d prior to certification expiration. The recertification program developed several avenues for applicators. A series of articles, each with a question set, educates applicators on non-point source pollution and urban storm water run-off, managing urban storm water runoff, and fertilizer regulations. Annually, additional articles on green industries best management practices will be added to the CEU resource bank. A series of videos, each with a question set, educates applicators on the green industries best management practices, nonpoint source pollution, watering wisely, fertilizer facts, and spreader calibration. The articles and videos are available online and in-office. A successful score on question sets earns the applicator CEUs toward certification renewal. The videos are also designed to be used as an introduction to in-the-field and hands-on training that earns the applicator CEUs toward certification renewal. The articles and videos are applicable statewide for certification renewal. Since fertilizer ordinances apply to everyone, this educational program can be used for residential and Master Gardener horticulture training as well.

Program Objectives

1. Provide avenues for urban commercial fertilizer applicators to obtain CEUs toward renewal of the Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer Applicators certification.
2. Provide training materials in a variety of educational formats including videos, printed articles, and field training to meet differing learning styles.

Methods

The target audience was identified as commercial horticulture professionals who apply fertilizers to urban environments. Florida statutes 482.1562 and 403.9338 require that all commercial fertilizer applicators obtain a Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer certification from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) by 1 Jan. 2014. Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer Applicators certification requires four CEUs every 4 years for license renewal from FDACS. The license became available beginning in 2010; however, guidelines for renewal were just recently released in early 2013. This has presented a challenge as individuals certified in 2010 will require an opportunity to earn CEUs beginning in 2014. Currently, there are very few avenues to receive license renewal CEUs. Additionally, the CEUs must be turned into FDACS 90 d prior to the license expiration date.

The recertification program provides a variety of opportuni-

ties for commercial fertilizer applicators to obtain the necessary CEUs for license renewal. Different choices to obtain CEUs include a series of videos, printed articles, in-the-field training, and traditional in-the-classroom training.

A series of five 10- to 14-min videos were produced on green industries best management practices topics. The topics include: *The Green Industries Best Management Practices Overview*, *Why Point the Finger at Nonpoint Source Pollution*, *Why Water Wisely, Facts, Functions and Figuring Fertilizers*, and *Smart Spreader Calibration*. Applicators view all five videos and complete an accompanying question set. A successful minimum score on the question set earns the applicator one CEU toward license renewal. The videos are also designed to be used as 10- to 14-min introductions to 50-min in-the-field training. Attending an in-the-field training earns the applicator one CEU toward license renewal.

A series of three articles were written on nonpoint source pollution. The article titles are: *Nonpoint Source Pollution: Stormwater Runoff*, *Nonpoint Source Pollution: Managing Urban Runoff and Pollution*, and *Nonpoint Source Pollution: Fertilizer Ordinances*. Applicators read an article and complete an accompanying question set. A successful minimum score earns the applicator one CEU per article toward license renewal.

Four 50-min PowerPoint presentations were produced for use in traditional in-the-classroom training. The topics are: *GI-BMPs for Turfgrass Managers*, *Why Landscapes Fail*, *Why Turfgrass Fails*, and *What's Wrong With My Palm*. Attending each 50-min presentation earns applicators one CEU toward license renewal.

The training materials are available in a variety of formats either on the county website, take-home DVD, in-office training, traditional in-classroom training, at point-of-purchase business trainings, and at conferences. The videos are available for viewing

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Results

on the county extension website and as a DVD. The articles are available via the county extension website and as printed material. Currently, applicators must contact the office for the questions; however, the question sets will be available via the website in the near future. PowerPoint presentations are viewed at scheduled training times at the county extension office, at point-of-purchase business locations, or at local and state conferences.

As a result of this program, opportunities for renewal of the Limited Certification for Urban Landscape Commercial Fertilizer certification are available for urban commercial fertilizer applicators. More than 100 individuals have received CEUs toward license renewal since the program's inception.