

Lawn Care



Newly Seeded Lawns

Your lawn has been seeded with a high quality seed. Proper watering is a must to insure good seed germination and establishment of your new lawn.

WATERING

From seeding until 3 to 6 weeks after germination, frequent light waterings are the best. The soil must not be allowed to dry out at this time. Water 1 to 3 times a day; enough to wet the soil to a depth of 1/2 inch. Make sure to sprinkle gently to avoid dislodging the seed or cause a wash out. Continue this schedule for 3 - 6 weeks after the seed germinates.

Remember the weather conditions and your soil type will vary your individual watering needs, so always check the soil moisture first.

When the grass seedlings reach a height of 1 to 2 inches the watering schedule must change. Begin to water more deeply, but less often, allowing the surface to dry slightly in between waterings. Gradually wean your lawn to 1 to 2 waterings per week. This will encourage the grass to form a deeper root system.

FERTILIZING

At the time of seeding, a starter fertilizer was applied. This fertilizer lasts 2- 4 weeks. After that time, your new lawn should be fertilized to improve the color or "green it up" and stimulate growth. Use a slow release formulation such as 19-6-8 at a rate of 2.5 to 5 pounds (1/2 to 1 lb. of actual nitrogen) per thou-

sand square feet of lawn. Apply half the fertilizer in one direction and one half in the other direction to get even coverage. (See Figure 1 at right) **Do not use any weed and feed or weed control products at this time!**

MOWING

Mowing can normally begin 4 to 8 weeks after seeding, when the grass reaches a height of 3 to 3 1/2 inches. Mow at a height of 2 to 2 1/2 inches. No more than 1/3 of the leaf should be removed at one cutting. (See Figure 2

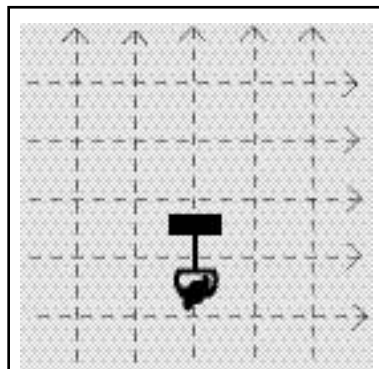
inside) Newly seeded lawns should be mowed more often than established lawns to encourage better rooting.

Before mowing, it is not necessary to remove the straw mulch which was originally placed over the new seed. The straw will break down over time and becomes good organic matter for your lawn. In fact, raking it off can cause damage to your new lawn by uprooting grass seedlings.

WEED CONTROL

After the lawn has been mowed three or four times, weed control products can be used. However, it is best to wait for one year before using these products. Be sure to follow label directions!

Avoid traffic over the seeded area as the lawn becomes established. Do not be disappointed if your new lawn looks sparse the first year. It takes about two years to develop a tight lawn.



Apply half the fertilizer amount in one direction and half in the opposite direction for best results.

Figure 1

Sodded Lawns

WATERING

Water newly laid sod heavily to wet the sod and the soil beneath to a depth of approximately 6 inches. If you are not sure, simply lift a piece of sod and dig down to check. After the initial watering, water moderately daily or every other day. Again your watering will vary depending upon the weather conditions and your soil type; however, the main point is to keep the sod itself moist. Do not allow the sod to dry out, which can result in shrinkage or even death. Avoid watering so heavily that the sod becomes waterlogged or saturated. Roots will not grow into waterlogged soil.

After sodding, inspect frequently to determine the moisture content of the soil. This can be done by gently lifting an edge of a sod strip. Especially watch edges near borders and sidewalks that often are the first to dry out. You will also be able to see if the sod is making good contact with the soil. If it is, you will see white roots developing and lifting the strip will become increasingly more difficult.

In 1 to 2 weeks the sod will root into the soil beneath. As the sod begins to root or “knit” into the soil, water more heavily and less frequently. Allow the sod to dry out between waterings, but not for long periods.

MOWING

Start mowing when the grass is about 3 inches tall and has rooted or “knitted” into the soil. Mow at a height of 2 1/2 inches during the establishment period. Avoid mowing when the soil is saturated or soft.

FERTILIZING

Before placement, your sod had been grown under optimum conditions. At the time of placement, fertilizer was applied to the soil beneath. Immediate fertilization therefore is not needed. After 4 to 6 weeks apply a complete (N-P-K) slow release fertilizer, such as 19-6-8, at a rate of 2.5 - 5 pounds (1/2 to 1 lb of actual nitrogen) per thousand square feet of lawn.

Established Lawns

WATERING

Turf likes about 1 inch of water per week. If nature does not provide adequate rainfall, you will need to supplement water for optimal growth. There is an easy

method to measure the amount of water put down by a sprinkler. Simply place a coffee can on the lawn getting watered and keep track of the time needed to put down 1 inch of water. Established lawns can go dormant for a few weeks without harm. But do not allow recently seeded lawns or sodded lawns to go without water.

Weather will affect your watering schedule. During periods of cool or wet weather, your lawn will need less moisture. Hot or windy conditions will increase your lawns water needs dramatically.

In many metro Milwaukee areas, heavy clay soils are common. Clay soils are often poorly drained, staying too wet and not drying out. Under these circumstances, less frequent watering is required. Sandy or gravelly soils are just the opposite. They drain quickly and dry out faster. In this case, more frequent watering is needed.

Often the soil surface may appear dry, but is actually moist underneath. If in doubt of the soil’s moisture content, dig down a few inches. The soil should be moist and crumbly. If it is sticky and wet, do not water; if it is dry to the touch, then water.

FERTILIZING

A yearly fertilization program on a lawn includes up to 3 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet divided into 2 to 3 applications. For example, 5 pounds of 19-6-8 fertilizer or 10 pounds of 10-8-6 fertilizer equals 1 pound of actual nitrogen.

Make your fertilizer application around September 1st and again in late-May or early June. A third application can be made as a dormant fertilization around November 1st. (See Figure 3 below) A dormant application helps with early spring green-up.

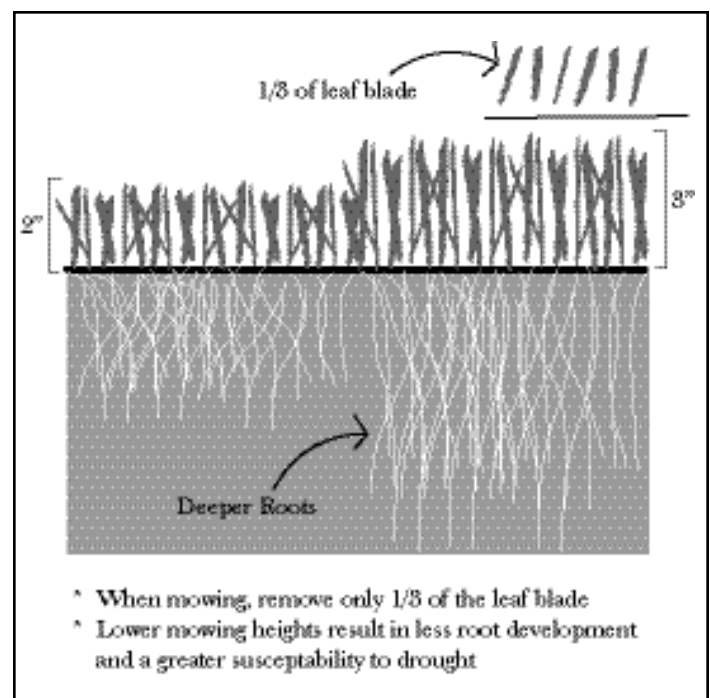


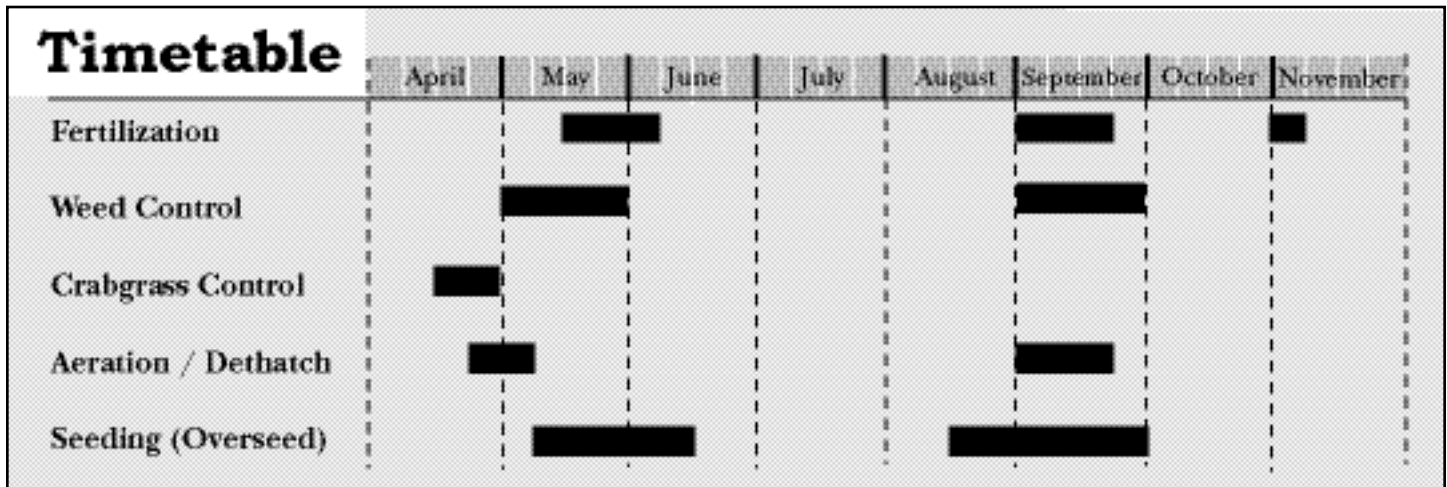
Figure 2

Fall fertilization is the most important. Nitrogen (N) is the nutrient needed in the largest quantities. Phosphorus(P) and Potassium (K) are usually adequate in the soil, so minimal amounts are needed. If you wish to find out for sure, have a soil test done.

Avoid fertilizing in the heat of summer. Also a slow release fertilizer will reduce the danger of fertilizer burn and over stimulation of top growth at the expense of root growth. Follow recommended settings on your spreader. Apply half the fertilizer in one direction and one half in the

prior to May 1st in our area (See Figure 3), when soil temperatures are 50° F or more. Post-emergent crabgrass controls are often not satisfactory.

Broadleaf weeds can be controlled manually by pulling or by using a liquid or granular product. Control is best done in May or September (See Figure 3) when the lawn is most actively growing. You must have adequate soil moisture and avoid hot (>80°F) weather. Make sure to apply products accurately and uniformly, following label directions. Spot treatments in problem areas may give good



other direction to get even coverage. (See Figure 1) Be careful to avoid getting fertilizer on walks, drives and other plant material.

MOWING

Mow when the grass is dry. Always use a sharp blade to cut rather than tear the grass. Mow as high as possible to encourage a healthy, deep rooted lawn. (See Figure 2) 2 1/2 to 3 inches or higher is the recommended height. The higher the mowing height, the deeper the roots. Remove no more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a cutting. Raise the mowing height in summer due to the increased heat stress.

Mow often and leave grass clippings on the lawn. This helps return nutrients back to the lawn. Clippings need only be removed or raked out if heavy clumps appear on the lawn.

WEED CONTROL

Weeds are not the cause of an unhealthy lawn, they are the result of one. Weed control should be utilized only as needed. Proper mowing, watering and fertilization are the keys to a healthy lawn.

Crabgrass control is most effective using a pre-emergent product. These must be applied before germination,

results and reduce the amount of chemical used.

PEST CONTROL

If the question of possible insect or disease problems comes up, know what you are dealing with and seek expert advise if necessary. Do not apply chemicals haphazardly before the problem is identified. Lawn problems can be difficult to diagnose and may be due to one or a combination of things. Your best defense is a healthy lawn. Follow good establishment and maintenance practices.

Limiting the use of lawn chemicals, saves money and allows the lawns ecosystem to stay in balance. First correctly diagnose lawn problems. Apply corrective measures only when needed and at the correct time. Be sure to follow the labeled directions!

THATCH

Turf generally has a thatch layer of partially decomposed plant tissue that accumulates above the soil surface. Usually light brown in color, it contains little or no soil. Thatch is not related to grass clippings! A thin layer of thatch is actually beneficial to the lawn.

Thatch thicker than 1/2 inch can be detrimental. Roots do not penetrate as deeply and are more susceptible to cold, heat or drought injury. Thick thatch also tends to

have poor water retention and infiltration; provides an environment for insects and diseases; and ties up fertilizers and pesticides.

Thatch thicker than 1/2 inch should be reduced by using a vertical mower, a dethatcher or an aerator. This is best done in September or late-April when the grass is actively growing. (See Figure 3) The process may need to be repeated the following spring or fall in extreme cases.

COMPACTION / AERATION

A healthy lawn must have adequate air for the root system, as well as water. Water should soak in and not run off. You should be able to easily push a knife blade into the soil.

If the soil becomes too compacted, you may need to aerate. Aeration also helps reduce excessive thatch. Core aeration that brings plugs of soil to the surface is the best. Early fall (See Figure 3) is the best time to aerate. You must have adequate soil moisture for aeration equipment to work. After the cores have dried on the surface, either drag the lawn or mow it to break up the cores, filtering the soil back into the lawn.

Johnson's Nursery, Inc., hopes that his information proves helpful to you. A well maintained and healthy lawn can be an asset to your landscape for many years.

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