

Lawns -Caring for an Established Lawn



Spring Clean-Up

- Remove dead grass and debris from the lawn by raking. If a lot of road salt has been dumped on the lawn, water it thoroughly to help leach the salt away from the grass roots.
- Established turf will benefit from aerating to get oxygen and water down to the root zone.
- An early spring application of limestone will help sweeten acidic soils. A general rate of application is 10 lbs per 100 ft² (or 50 kg/100 m²). Half may be applied in spring and half in the fall. Have a lab test the soil every three years to determine lime requirements. Brookfield Road Cool Climate Research Station provides this service.
- Apply a slow-release lawn fertilizer (Parkwood 21-6-12) at the recommended rate by mid to late May. Use a rotary spreader when the grass is reasonably dry at the recommended rate on the bag. Do not over-apply as this can burn your lawn.
- It's a good practice to mow a little high in spring to encourage deep root growth and smother weeds. Mowers set to two and a half inches will provide a well-groomed cover and allow for optimum root development.
- Dig out weeds such as dandelion and get the deep roots out. Add soil and grass seed to fill the holes left in the lawn from removing weeds.

Summer Treatment

- Late June to early July is a good time to give a second fertilization with a high nitrogen fertilizer such as Parkwood 21-6-12. Do not fertilize if the lawn is water stressed or if the temperatures are above 25°C.
- If there is a shortage of rainfall, give the lawn a deep watering weekly. One to two inches of water weekly will keep the lawn surviving.
- Mow frequently with a sharp mower set to cut high, 2.5" - 3".
- Delay use of weed killers until early fall (August – September), or when temperatures are between 15 and 20°C for best results.
- Watch for evidence of insect and disease activity. The most prevalent pest in lawns are Chinch bugs, Sod Cutworm, and European Marsh Crane Flies. Time application of pesticides for best results before too much damage has been done. Ask for help at the garden center.

Fall Practices

- Apply the other half of the limestone if you applied half in the spring.
- Fall is the time to apply fall fertilizer with a lower nitrogen number but higher phosphorus and potash numbers (ie. 6-8-14). This will strengthen the roots and improve disease resistance of the grass. Apply all fertilizers according to package directions to avoid burning the lawn.

Terms

- Aerating: using a manual or mechanical device to remove small cores of soil which relieves soil compaction and allows for better gas exchange and deeper water / fertilizer penetration into the soil.
- Topdressing: very early in the spring you may apply a very thin layer of clay, peat, and sand over the lawn to help decompose organic matter and enrich the soil.
- Slow release fertilizer: fertilizer that has been designed to release its nutrients to the grass slowly over the summer.