

LAWN MAINTENANCE STANDARDS & AND TURF-CARE INFORMATION

An attractive lawn raises property values and is an asset to the community. The Association regards grass over six inches or higher as too high. As homeowners you are responsible for maintaining all of your lot, including areas within the right-of-ways, behind the curb of the street and sidewalk area, drainage easements, and any other easement areas on your property. When you make the effort to keep your yard looking good, it pays off for everyone in the community. Remember, as per the Rules and Regulations, each homeowner shall use his or her best efforts to keep and maintain attractive, healthy, live and growing conditions, any and all grass, shrubs, trees etc.

A Good Place to Start

Soil Amendments are the proper pH of your soil that is essential to maintaining a rich, healthy soil base in which your lawn can thrive. This can be accomplished through the use of chemical soil amendments.

What are chemical soil amendments? Chemical soil amendments are inorganic amendments that change the pH levels of your soil. For example, lime reduces the acidity of soil, while sulfur causes it to be less alkaline (having a pH more than 7). Other amendments include potassium, phosphorus and micronutrients.

What is the proper pH level? Most lawn grasses prefer a slightly acid soil (pH 5.5 to 6.5). An alkaline soil has a soil pH above 7.0, while a soil pH less than 5.0 is too acidic.

If you would like to have your soil tested, this can be done by contacting UGA College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences at 912-652-7981. If you would like to research this process on the Internet, the following links will provide all of the information you will need.

<http://www.ugaextension.com/chatham/anr/SoilTest.html>

<http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C896.html>

When should they be applied? Lime can be added any time of year, but applying between August and October is ideal. Sulfur may be applied in spring or fall, depending on your specific soil test results. If large amounts are needed, it may be necessary to amend in two stages - once in early spring and again in fall.

Fertilizers

What types of fertilizers are available for purchase?

Complete fertilizers contain nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium in the same product and may include other essential mineral elements and balanced fertilizers provide nutrients in a predetermined ratio designed to meet a lawn's individual requirements for those elements. Overall, turf grasses require nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium.

What do the numbers mean on the bag?

The analysis- This indicates the percentage (by weight) of the three major nutrients in a fertilizer: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. The analysis is printed on the front of every fertilizer package. For example: 4-1-2.

- 4 - First number is nitrogen (N). Nitrogen makes grass plants grow and become greener
- 1 - Second number is phosphorus (P). Phosphorus stimulates root and seedling development.
- 2 - Third number is potassium (K). Potassium promotes disease and drought tolerance. How fast is the nitrogen released? This determines how fast the grass will "green up," how much it will grow, and how long the results will last. Lawn grasses require a steady, controlled feeding to produce a thick, green lawn. Controlled-release fertilizers deliver just enough quick-release nitrogen to produce a fast greening.

When should I apply fertilizer?

It's best to apply granular fertilizer in the early evening or right before it rains/watering. Applying fertilizer in the early evening gives the lawn time to absorb the nutrients, while rain/watering washes the fertilizer down to the grass roots and will prevent granules from burning the lawn. NOTE: Carefully read and follow the label directions

regarding weed controlled, safety for specific plants, application rates and methods, water requirements, and any safety precautions.

Applying Granular Fertilizer

Steps for applying granular fertilizer:

1. Make sure the spreader and fertilizer is dry.
2. Set the rate-of-flow lever according to the setting listed on the fertilizer bag. If you have any doubts, apply too little rather than too much.
3. Close the hopper vent. Place the spreader on a hard surface and fill the hopper slowly. Wear gloves and be sure to keep fertilizer away from eyes and skin.
4. For complete coverage, cut the recommended application rate in half and apply even in a crisscross manner.

Weed and Feed

Weed and Feed is a common term referring to fertilizer containing weed killer for broadleaf weeds such as dandelions. The weed killers in these types of fertilizers are "contact killers," and are effective only if the weeds are already actively growing. They will not kill weeds, which have not germinated.

Crabgrass and Pre-emergent Weed Control

Crabgrass is an aggressive weedy lawn grass that emerges each spring from seed. Mow your lawn high to thicken it and reduce the ability of crabgrass to establish in your lawn. Pre-emergents are weed killers that must be applied before the weeds germinate. They are ineffective if the weeds are actively growing. Pre-emergent weed killers are often mixed with fertilizer. Crabgrass normally starts to germinate when the ground temperature reaches 60° F. Many professional landscapers apply at least two applications starting as early as February.

Weed Control Expectations

How long does it normally take for weed control products to work? Generally, 10-14 days.

Spring Watering

How often should I water my lawn in the spring?

Water your lawn as needed to keep the soil moist to a two to three inch depth. You can measure this by inserting a nail or screwdriver into the soil, which should easily penetrate soil that's properly moist. Symptoms of inadequate water are easily seen: your grass slowly loses its bright green color and starts to fade to yellow. Additional stress will cause it to turn tan, indicating drought dormancy. You may also notice wilting, which causes grass blades to roll or fold. If you walk across your lawn and your footprints remain in the grass, or lawn mower tracks remain visible, your lawn needs water.

What is the best way to water my lawn?

Established lawns should be watered deeply, but infrequently. Deep watering once a week encourages deeper root growth, while frequent, shallow watering produces a limited root system. When watering, make sure you moisten the top three to four inches of soil, which covers the root zone. Although watering frequency depends on the type of grass, your soil, and the weather, most grasses require about one inch of water each week for healthy growth. The best time to water is in the early morning. This conserves water that would evaporate if you were to water later in the day, but also allows grass to dry before evening.

How do I prevent disease development?

Grass that remains wet for long periods of time is more susceptible to disease development. If you're using a movable sprinkler, let it run in one spot just until the water begins to run off the surface, then move to a different area of the lawn. Monitor your underground irrigation or sprinkler system to ensure that you moisten the lawn's entire root zone without over-watering any sections. Water the lawn once grass begins to discolor and wilt. If you can't keep the grass green, water your lawn with at least one-half inch of water every seven to 14 days, which will keep the plants alive even if they are dormant. Once your lawn has turned brown and lost all color during drought dormancy, it will take several weeks of steady watering to spur re-growth from the crown area of the plants.

Watering Wisely

Spring rains are normally sufficient for a healthy lawn and landscape, but if you do need to water during a dry spell, remember to water deeply so the moisture penetrates three to four inches into the soil. The point is to help turf and plants to establish

roots deeper into the soil, making them sturdier and more drought resistant. In contrast, shallow rooted plants are more prone to injury from soil compaction and temperature extremes, and they absorb fewer nutrients from the soil.

Brown Patch Disease

Brown patch affects virtually all warm-season turf grasses, but is most common in St. Augustine grass. It becomes a severe problem when high temperatures and high humidity exist for a long period of time. Brown patch is caused by the fungus *Rhizoctonia Solani*, which lives in the soil, thatch, and crowns of grass.

Because it is widespread geographically, the fungus creates different disease symptoms depending on the turf grass it infects. The first symptoms are water-soaked areas on leaf blades that soon dry, wither and turn light brown. On most lawns, the grass is cut somewhat high and the disease appears as straw-colored circular areas ranging from two to 50 feet in diameter. On closely mown grasses, diseased areas also tend to be circular, but with an advancing gray ring surrounding the brown patches that is most visible early in the morning when the grass is damp.

The affected grass is closely pressed to the soil surface, so it looks sunken. Blighted grass may pull up easily because the rot occurs where the grass blade attaches. In some cases, the turf grass doesn't show rings, but thins out in large areas. You may also see leaf spots that begin as small dark spots, then enlarge and eventually cover the entire leaf blade. Centers of the enlarged spots are tan or straw-colored, with a dark brown border. Brown patch develops quickly when humidity is high and temperatures range from 80 to 85° F. It spreads most rapidly when plant surfaces are wet. Although the lawn may become infected and develop the disease at cooler temperatures, there is little or no activity below 70°. Because brown patch is a soil-borne microorganism, it is difficult to control. One key is minimizing leaf wetness at night, so avoid watering in the evening, and prune shrubs and trees to improve air circulation and dry out wet turf. It is also important to mow at the proper cutting height and frequency, and to fertilize properly to boost healthy plant growth. Finally, in cases where fungicides are warranted, the timing of applications is critical for control.

Lawn Mowing Tips

The experts and Landscape Institute report that the most common mowing mistakes are mowing too infrequently and cutting grass too short. Here are their tips on proper mowing technique:

Avoid Scalping- Letting grass grow tall and then removing more than 1/3 of the leaf blade is called "scalping" and can damage the lawn. Mowing grass extremely low can also damage the lawn by cutting into the crowns of the plants.

Sharpen Blades- Make sure your mower blades are sharp in order to cut cleanly. Dull blades can shred grass and cause discoloration at the tips because frayed grass blades lose moisture easily. Sharpen the blades of rotary mowers several times each growing season. Reel type mowers usually only require sharpening once a year, but adjust them to ensure they cut cleanly. Some grass species have tough blades, which cause blades to wear quickly.

Be Gentle with Damaged Grass- Raise the mower height a notch or two when mowing a lawn that's recovering from drought, insect damage or disease.

Use Your Grass Clippings- Recycle grass clippings to reduce water loss, lower soil temperatures, and return nutrients to the soil. Plus, you'll save the trouble of bagging and keep clippings out of our already-clogged landfills. In fact, many communities will no longer accept grass clippings in household trash.

Don't Cut Wet or Wilted Grass- Avoid cutting wet grass, which can cause brown spots because clippings clump together and smother your lawn. Cutting wilted grass during the hottest part of the day can also cause severe damage to your lawn.

Know When to Mow- The best guide for mowing frequency is the growth of your grass. Plan to cut less than one-third of the grass blade in one mowing. Keep in mind that certain grasses, such as Bermuda grass, zoysia grass, and centipede grass, require close mowing to stay healthy. Allowing these grasses to grow too high will promote thatch development.

So You Missed a Mowing- During periods of rapid growth, lawns may require mowing as frequently as every three to four days. Of course, sometimes we just don't have time to mow as often as we'd like. If your grass has grown too high, reset your mower to its highest cutting level. Three or four days later, reset the mower to cut at the normal height and mow your grass again.

Your landscape is a highly visible part of your home investment and the first thing anyone sees while visiting your home or community. Protect it wisely.