



Lawn Care Schedule

In our area of NC we can grow either cool-season or warm-season grasses. **Cool-season grasses** such as Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, tall fescue, and creeping red fescue, grow well during the cool months, between September and May. These grasses are adapted to the

Piedmont and Mountains. If you are planting a cool-season lawn, we recommend planting fescue blend for best performance in our area. Fescues are also more shade tolerant than bluegrass. Perennial ryegrass is not reliable as a permanent lawn and is usually used to overseed dormant warm-season lawns for winter color. **Warm-season grasses** such as bahiagrass, bermudagrass, carpetgrass, centipedegrass, St. Augustine grass, and zoysiagrass, thrive in hot weather (80-95°F) and go dormant when the weather turns cool.

WEEDS: Repeated weed invasions often occur in lawns with a thin or weak stand of grass as they take advantage of bare ground to establish. Poor lawns are generally caused by using a grass that is not adapted to our area, or improper mowing, watering, and/or fertilizing. Pre-emergent herbicides, including eco-friendly corn-gluten based pre-emergents, can be applied to help prevent weeds from germinating in lawns and garden beds. Do not apply pre-emergents if you will be broadcasting lawn seed shortly or have just seeded. Compacted soil, excess thatch, diseases, and insects may also affect lawn quality.

Cool Season Grasses (Fescue, Kentucky Bluegrass, Ryegrass)

January

Do not fertilize this month. Avoid walking on frozen lawns. Handpull winter annual weeds such as henbit and chickweed or mow them down before they go to seed.

February

Service lawn mower (air filter, sparkplug, oil, mower blade, tires) You can fertilize established lawns at this time. Scout for weeds and see section on **Weeds** above. Apply pre-emergent when the daffodils and forsythia bloom (which may be next month depending on the weather).

March

Fertilize this month, if necessary, according to your soil test results. If your lawn has good color and vigor, skip it and wait to apply in fall. **Fall is the best time to fertilize.** Apply pre-emergent when the daffodils and/or forsythia bloom. You can overseed bare spots now but the ideal time to seed or overseed is fall.

April

Do not fertilize established lawns now. **Mow frequently** (no more than 1/3 the height of the lawn). Water early in the morning, if needed. On clay soils, apply one inch of water per rainless week (but observe any water restrictions that are in effect.) See June for more.

May

Gradually raise mowing height to 2.5 to 3.5 inches as temperatures warm. Mow frequently. Post emergent herbicides formulated for your lawn type may be used to control weeds. More eco-friendly: use corn gluten pre-emergent (Concern Weed Prevention Plus) spring, summer, and fall, and handpull weeds that get past it.

June

Mow frequently. Fescue is less drought tolerant the Kentucky bluegrass. During dry spells water fescue if needed but at least every 3 weeks without rain. Kentucky bluegrass can go dormant and begin to grow again once favorable conditions return.

Signs of drought stress:

- footprints remain in grass well after walking on it.
- lawn color gets bluish-gray cast
- leaves are rolled or folded
- if it is difficult to insert a screwdriver into the ground, it is very dry.

July

See May and June. Apply Concern Weed Prevention Plus, if using. If **summer diseases** such as brown patch or pythium are present, be sure to collect clippings instead of leaving them on the grass and, if you are irrigating, irrigate before sunrise. If necessary, apply fungicides.

August

Water dormant lawns every three weeks if there it hasn't rained (or you may have to reseed in fall). Continue to **mow regularly**, no more than 1/3 of grass height. **Apply pre-emergent** for winter annual or perennial weeds. Lawns that look wilted even after watering and/or have been torn up by skunks, birds, & moles, may have **grub infestation**. Cut and roll back several square foot sections of turf to check for white grubs. If more than 7 are found in each, apply grub control. Dethatch or aerate Kentucky bluegrass if needed.

September

Now is the time to install sod or establish, renovate, or overseed cool-season lawns. Water newly seeded areas regularly. See our handout on Cool Season Lawns for more info. **Aerate your lawn now** to alleviate compaction problems on clay soils. **Now is the time to fertilize cool season lawns.** Soil tests are recommended every few years for proper fertilizing. Otherwise, use a 12-4-8 or 16-4-8 where 1/4 -1/2 the nitrogen is "slowly available" or "water insoluble". Continue to mow regularly as needed. Treat for grubs (See August.)

October

Apply pre-emergent herbicide such as Concern Weed Prevention Plus once temps are consistently in the mid-70's. **Keep lawns free of falling leaves which can smother them.** Recycle leaves as mulch by shredding and composting. **Install sod. Last chance to reseed or start a new lawn by seed.** Mow as necessary. Water new lawns with 1 inch of water per rainless week (or as per water restrictions.) See **Tips** next page for more watering info.

November

Install sod as long as the soil isn't frozen (unlikely this month). Keep new sod moist. **Fertilize this month with a winterizer fertilizer.** See Sept. for more info. Watch for rust and dollar spot diseases. Keep lawns free of falling leaves. Water new lawns with 1 inch of water per rainless week (or as per water restrictions.)

December

Run gas mowers dry to prevent gummy buildup over winter or add stabilizer to it and run it for a few minutes. Drain and replace the oil. Recycle the used oil. Water new lawns with 1 inch of water per rainless week (or as per restrictions.)

see over for Warm Season Grasses

Warm-Season Grasses (St. Augustine's, Zoysiagrass, Centipedegrass, Bahiagrass, Carpetgrass, Bermudagrass)

January

Water dormant and overseeded lawns if it has been dry, unseasonably warm, and windy. Maintain lawns overseeded with ryegrass at a height of 1 inch. Avoid walking on dormant lawns to prevent damage.

February

See January. **Treat wild garlic** with a broadleaf herbicide (i.e. RoundUp) when the air temp. is above 50°F.

March

Water dormant and overseeded lawns if it has been dry, warm, and windy. Brown patch disease attacks as lawns emerge from dormancy. Collect infested clippings. Avoid overfertilizing and overwatering to reduce disease. **Apply pre-emergent herbicide late in the month.**

April

Now is the time to overseed bare spots, seed new lawns, or install sprigs/plugs (as long as day temps are consistently above 60°F.) Water new lawns regularly. **Wait until established lawns are green before fertilizing.*** Watch for brown patch, dollar spot, and deadspot diseases.

May

Fertilize St. Augustinegrass, and bermudagrass** with slow-release nitrogen. **Water** newly seeded or plugged lawns regularly for best establishment. **Mow regularly at recommended height.*

June

Dethatch your lawn if the thatch layer measures more than 1/2 inch. Last chance to renovate or install a warm season lawn. **Apply 1 inch of water per rainless week**, observing any restrictions. ***Fertilize St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass, carpetgrass, bermudagrass & zoysiagrass.** Mow regularly. Watch for and, if necessary, treat for mole crickets.

July

Apply 1 inch of water per rainless week, observing any restrictions. ***Fertilize St. Augustinegrass and bermudagrass.** **Raise mower height** a notch or two and mow regularly. Watch for and, if necessary, treat for mole crickets.

August

***Fertilize all (see June).** **Mow regularly** removing no more than 1/3 the height of the grass. Lawns that look wilted even after watering and/or have been torn up by skunks, birds, & moles, may have **grub infestation**. Cut and roll back several square foot sections of turf to check for white grubs. If more than 7 are found in each, apply grub control. Water only areas that need it.

September

If desired, late in the month overseed with ryegrass for a green winter lawn. Bermuda tolerates overseeding best. **Apply 1 inch of water per rainless week**, observing any restrictions. Do not lime carpetgrass or centipedegrass unless a soil test calls for it. Raise mower height 1/2 inch.

October

Overseed with ryegrass early in the month. **Apply pre-emergent** herbicide such as Concern Weed Prevention Plus. **Water as needed** to prevent stress. **Keep lawns free of falling leaves which can smother them.** Recycle leaves as mulch by shredding and composting.

November

Keep lawns free of falling leaves. Lawns will be going dormant now. Dormant, overseeded bermudagrass & zoysiagrass can be fertilized and should be mowed between 1 and 2 1/2 inches high. Dormant lawns may need to be watered occasionally.

December

Mow overseeded bermudagrass before it gets taller than 1 1/2 inches. Handpull or spot treat **winter weeds.** Overseeded bermudagrass can be fertilized this month. If you are not overseeding with rye, see December mower care notes on previous page.

*** # of Lbs. of Nitrogen/1000 sq. ft. to apply annually:** *Bermudagrass*- 2 to 5 lbs., *Carpetgrass & Centipedegrass*- 1/2 to 1lb., *St. Augustinegrass*- 2 to 3 lbs., *Zoysiagrass*- 1 to 3 lbs.

To apply 1 lb. of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. feet, divide 100 by the first number on the fertilizer bag to determine the amount of product to be used per 1,000 sq.ft. EXAMPLE: A 16-4-8 fertilizer. 100 divided by 16 equals 6.25. Therefore, 6.25 lbs. of fertilizer per 1,000 sq. ft. will deliver 1 lb. of nitrogen. Use low phosphorus or no phosphorus fertilizers for centipedegrass such as 1-1-2 or 1-1-3. At least ¼ to ½ of the nitrogen should be "slowly available" or "water insoluble". **NOTE: These are the ANNUAL rates and should be divided and applied during the specified months.**

**** Mowing heights:** *Bermudagrass, Carpetgrass, & Centipedegrass* - 1 to 2 inches, *St. Augustinegrass* - 2 to 3 inches, *Zoysiagrass*- 3/4 to 1 1/2 inches. Leave undiseased clippings on your lawn. They are equivalent to a 4-1-3 fertilizer!

Tips:

- Frequent fertilizing creates more maintenance (mowing), increases thatch, and can contribute to groundwater pollution.
- Don't apply fertilizer when the lawn is wet or when it is stressed.
- Don't apply pre-emergents if you will be seeding soon or if you have just seeded.
- Mow regularly for best lawn health and keep mower blades sharp.
- Consider a mulching mower which shreds grass blades eliminating the need to dispose of clippings and returns valuable nitrogen to the soil.
- Changing the direction you mow each time helps prevent soil compaction.
- Water early in the morning (before sunrise) to help prevent lawn diseases and to conserve water by reducing evaporation.
- It is better to water thoroughly and less often than watering lightly and more frequently. Deep watering encourages better rooting. Avoid overwatering which can leach plant nutrients from the soil and reduce the amount of oxygen available to the grass. Never water a lawn every day unless you are starting a new lawn or renovating one.

• Water-saving tips:

- reduce slopes
- water early in the morning before sunrise
- use the most efficient irrigation system available
- select drought tolerant turfgrass
- mow high
- minimize fertilizer and avoid summer applications
- avoid watering so that water runs off and is not soaked into the lawn
- add organic material as topdressing whenever possible
- Avoid using a weed eater to trim grass near the trunks of young trees and shrubs. The monofilament line on weed eaters spins so rapidly that it can easily damage bark and injure the health of the plant. Instead, create mulch rings around trees or shrubs in the middle of the lawn to suppress the grass and minimize the chance for damage.
- Keep family and pets away from the area when you are mowing to reduce the chance of injury from flying debris.