



Establishing and Maintaining a Premium Lawn

A Premium lawn needs organic compost and a lot of water at the very beginning to get it established. Once established (after 6 months) the water is slowly tapered off to minimal levels. It is very important to keep the grass 3 inches or higher and never mow the lawn less than 3 inches high.

1. Soil:

Healthy soil contains organisms that fight lawn and landscape pest. The foundation for plant health is deep roots and efficient nutrient uptake. A healthy organic rich soil will support deep root development. Conversely, chemicals destroy native soil organisms and remove natural insect predators that combat common lawn diseases and weed proliferation.

Start with testing your soil to learn of its physical properties and characteristics. The soil test will also identify biological or nutrient deficiencies and pH levels. If the soil is sandy, simply put 2 inches of good soil on top of it. If the soil is clay, put 40 pounds of granular Gypsum per 1,000 square feet and then put 2 inches of good soil on top of the Gypsum (Gypsum treatment should be done for 3 years).

2. Watering:

Over watering promotes shallow root, fungus diseases, mosquitos, and nutrient run-off. Do not start watering when your irrigation system is turned on in the spring. Wait until the soil dries down to 4 "or so. Do not let your irrigation company set the irrigation clock. They are water delivery experts, not lawn experts. Encourage deep roots by watering deeply and infrequently. In temperate climates, water 2 x per week in the hottest weather period for at least one hour per zone. Water less, or not at all, during cool periods.

Note: Irrigation systems should be activated only during pre-dawn or post- dusk periods. NEVER water during daylight hours. Excessive evaporation and fungus development will occur. Deep watering usually equals 20 minutes on sunny lawns; 15 minutes on shady lawns.

New Lawns: During the first month for a newly seeded lawn, water every morning at the start of the day. In hotter areas or weather periods, water twice a day (or more) depending on the weather and the time of the year. Seeds must be kept moist during germination.

After about a month, once the seed has germinated, water every other day for 1 week, then two days per week, then once a week. Be attentive to the lawn for 6 months (baby it). If it needs water, water it! In the fall, once it's established (after a month) there's no need to water it once temperatures get very cold.

By the following year, it should need far less water, if at all, especially in areas that have steady rainfall.

3. Mowing

- a. Mow high: 3 ½ - 4 "high. While 3 1/2 inches is OK, at 4 inches the grass is absolutely gorgeous (there's nothing like it). In addition, at 4 inches your lawn will be 99.8% weed free since sunlight has a hard time reaching the weed seeds to germinate them. (At 3 1/2"-4" = 15% more weeds.) Longer leaf blades collect more sun, provide more energy o roots, shade out weeds and prevent rapid moisture loss.
- b. Mow more often: Remove no more than 1/3 of the leaf blade at any one time.

- c. Mow sharp: Dull mower blades tear grass which invites fungus infections.
- d. Leaf mulching: Use mulching mower and leaving grass clippings in place (don't rake or blow away). Grass clippings will break down and provide nutrients to the lawn.

4. Aeration:

Aerate annually in the fall. Aerate more often in high traffic areas. Aeration reduces compaction and encourages better drainage, increases oxygen to the soil (yes -roots need to breath), and increases nutrient absorption.

5. Feeding:

Feed the soil, not the plants. Leave grass clippings. They return valuable nutrients to the soil. Feed lawns in fall only. Spring fertilization encourages fast, weak growth, invigorates weed and invites disease problems in hot weather. Use compost, compost tea, or slow-release organic fertilizer. They stimulate soil health and are also less likely to mix with rain water run-off, reducing the risk for watershed pollution, or eutrophication.

In the fall, mow fallen leaves into a fine leaf mulch and lightly spread over lawn. The remainder of leaves should be raked into shrub and tree areas as mulch – super low cost natural fertilizer.

6. Overseeding:

Cut short, rake and overseed in early fall when grass seed germinates best and weed seed are dormant. Grass will then out-compete weeds in the spring with a more robust root structure gained during the fall. Do not cut the lawn short or rake away grass clippings in the spring as it will promote opportunities for weeds.

As part of a fall overseeding, spread the seed first and then put down organic compost. Use a high quality organic compost. Use $\frac{3}{4}$ cubic yards of compost per 1,000 square feet (only $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch high). Not more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch since over fertilization encourages the grass to grow faster and the goal here is slow growth.

Manure isn't a complete form of nourishment for the soil and fertilizer only provides a quick boost. Organic compost is best since it provides a slow release of nutrients and will nourish the soil in the optimal way resulting in a richer, more beautiful lawn.

7. Diversity:

Clover fixes nitrogen (natural fertilizer) and fill gaps in lawns. Dandelions are excellent aerators and are soon overwhelmed by the health, taller turf they pioneer.

8. Participation:

A healthy, pest resistant lawn, like the human body, is a process. With consistent inputs of intelligence, rather than commercial products, a balance ecosystem that is resilient and resistant to environmental stresses will be generated and sustained.

9. Having Faith:

Before resorting to sprays, determine and fix the cause and avoid continual treatment of symptoms. If spraying much occur, use naturally derived substances. In any case, they will probably kill beneficial insects as well as your target pest. Organic sprays should be applied early or late in the day to avoid contact with pollinators.

Note: Use of tick and mosquito sprays are toxic to humans, pets, and wildlife. They kill beneficial insects, pollute water and the soil. They create a false sense of security as they cannot possible kill all the ticks in a yard, hence the ticks are able return. Even the organic spray are harmful to beneficial insects and pollinators. Instead, protect oneself and children with frequently applied personal repellents, as one would with a sunscreen, in concert with regular body checks.