

Tips to lawn maintenance

Get your mower ready: Make sure your lawn mower is ready before you need to use it. Bringing it in before the start of the season will ensure you won't have to wait along with everyone else in your neighborhood. Note: Don't overlook sharpening your mower's blade. For the cleanest cuts -- and healthiest-looking lawn -- sharpen the blade at least once a year

Aerate compacted soil: Most lawns have trouble growing in compacted soil (many weeds, unfortunately, thrive in it). If you need to or want to aerate, do so in spring -- when your grass is actively growing.

Begin mowing: Allow your grass to grow no more than 3 inches tall before you start mowing. The best general rule to follow is that you want to keep most grass types at least 2 inches tall -- this height helps the grass ward off weeds and withstand summer drought. But you don't want to remove more than a third of the total grass height at any one mowing. Removing too much stresses the grass.

Apply fertilizer: If you feed your lawn a couple times a year, a light application of lawn fertilizer in spring helps get your grass off to a great start. Wait to fertilize until your lawn needs mowing for the first time. Do a light application and use a slow-release or organic fertilizer; don't try to feed your lawn for a quick green-up; this doesn't usually work and can harm your grass.

Attack grubs: If lawn grubs are an issue in your lawn, prevent further damage by applying grub-control product that continues to work throughout the season. The best time to do this is between Feb. to May.

Mow as needed: Because most grasses in this region like it cool, they won't grow as fast when temperatures go over 80 degrees F. During hot, dry periods, it may only need mowing once every two or three weeks (wait for it to grow about 3 inches tall). In cooler, moister weather patterns, mow enough to keep it from getting more than 3 inches tall -- that could be every week or more than once a week.

Water wisely: the amount of water to put down depends on the soil type but a good rule of thumb is an inch and one half of water per week.

Fall feedings: If you only fertilize your lawn once a year, autumn is the best time to do it. In fact, your lawn would appreciate a light application of fertilizer in early fall and again in late fall.

Aerate: If you didn't aerate in spring and your lawn needs it, fall is a great time. Don't overlook the importance of aerating. It'll help your lawn thrive.

Continue mowing: As temperatures cool, your lawn will grow faster again. Keep mowing regularly through the end of the season

Fall cleanup: Clean up fallen leaves. If you don't want to spend time raking them, run your lawn mower over your lawn two or three times. This will chop the leaves into fine pieces; they quickly decompose and add to your soil's structure. Or rake up and compost the fallen leaves.