



Turfgrass Maintenance Guidelines for Established Lawns

Heartland Turf-Type Tall Fescue

The following are general guidelines for maintaining cool-season turfgrass in the St. Louis area. Please note that the guidelines refer to established lawns. For care of new sod, refer to our brochure: Watering New Turfgrass Sod.

WATERING

Once established, turfgrass should receive approximately 1 inch of water per week, by either rain or irrigation. Mature lawns should receive deep, infrequent waterings, approximately every 5 to 7 days, to promote a healthy, extensive root system. Watering too frequently will result in shallow roots and weaker turf. Ideally, water in the early morning to minimize evaporation. Avoid evening watering in hot, humid weather, as this can contribute to disease.

Water requirements may vary from lawn to lawn due to soil conditions, terrain, etc. In order to practice responsible water use, you should learn to recognize signs of dry turfgrass. Grass in need of water will have a grey-blue cast, rather than its normal green color. The grass blades may also shrivel and have a “pine-needle” appearance. Turfgrass in this condition should be watered immediately. Inspecting your lawn frequently will help to detect water requirements for your lawn and to avoid over- or under-watering. Consult our watering guide for greater detail.

MOWING

Grass should be mowed on a regular basis during its growing season. Optimum mowing height for a residential lawn is between 1 ½ and 3 ½ inches. Keep mower blades sharp for a clean cut. As a general rule, never cut off more than 1/3 of a grass blade at a time. Should your grass get “too tall”, take it down gradually over the next few mowings. If you are mowing frequently enough, there is no need to remove clippings, as they are actually beneficial if left to decompose naturally.

FERTILIZATION

Fertilizer should be applied 3 to 4 times per year, using the following schedule as a general guide. Use a rotary-type spreader for best results. Apply in two different directions to avoid streaking. Fertilizer should be watered in immediately.

September 1 – September 15	Apply a balanced fertilizer (such as 12-12-12) at the recommended rate.
November 1 – November 15	The most important application of the year for root development. Apply high nitrogen fertilizer (such as 32-3-8) at 1 ½ times the recommended rate. Use partial slow-release nitrogen if possible.
April 1 – April 15	Apply a combination fertilizer + crabgrass control product. Do not exceed recommended rate.
May 15 – June 1	Fertilize if needed for color. Use a balanced, slow release fertilizer. This is a great time of year to use a non-burning, organic product. Examples include Milorganite, Nature Safe, or products made from processed animal manure.

WEED, INSECT, AND DISEASE CONTROL

Use crabgrass pre-emergent control as specified in above table. Broadleaf weeds (clover, dandelion, ivy, thistle, etc.) may be controlled with granular or sprayable products. Consult a local garden center for available products. Granular products must be applied in morning when there is dew on the grass. Sprayable products are ideal when weed pressure is sporadic. Grassy weeds can also be spot-sprayed, but usually require different products than broadleaf weeds. When spot-spraying, be careful to apply at proper rates, as to not damage the turf. Herbicides should be avoided when temperatures exceed 90°F. To control white grubs and other insects, apply insecticide with the active ingredient “imidacloprid” between June 15th and July 15th. Timing is important for effective control. Be sure to water in. Our turfgrass varieties are naturally resistant to many fungal diseases. Under proper watering and fertilization, you should experience little disease pressure. If diseases do occur, first check your watering practices to be sure that you are avoiding evening waterings. If you wish to treat for disease, there are some fungicides available for the residential market. Again, consult a local garden center for products.