



Lawn Care Guide



Planting Your Lawn –

The best time to sow grass seed is in spring or fall, with the period from Mid-August to the end of September being the very best. You can also “dormant” seed by seeding when nature does, in late fall. The seed works into the soil under the snow where it will sprout the following spring.

12 Step Process:

- 1) Add materials necessary to correct soil quality, compaction and PH.
- 2) Incorporate amendments / nutrients into soil with a spade or tiller. Mix thoroughly.
- 3) Pick out weeds, stones, sticks, old grass clumps and other refuse.
- 4) Drag / rake the seedbed to establish level and to reveal high and low spots.
- 5) Water seedbed thoroughly to settle soil and further reveal low spots.
- 6) Pull or spray with herbicide any weeds left or brought up by first watering. Fill in low spots.
- 7) Give seedbed a final raking or light rolling with a roller to make it level.
- 8) Spread New Lawn Starter fertilizer (8-16-8 or similar) over area.
- 9) Sow seed by hand or spreader; if by hand, choose a still day.
- 10) Rake in seed lightly or roll with a roller to insure good contact with the seedbed.
- 11) Apply damp peat moss or mulch. Make it 1/8 - 3/16 inch deep.
- 12) Roll mulch over seeds with light roller.
- 13) Consistent moisture is critical to a successful stand of grass. Watering your new lawn is necessary on a daily basis. Water lightly, to keep soil consistently moist but don't allow to puddle. Just a few hours of dry soil, combined with sun and warm temperatures can kill the seedlings. By the time the lawn has been mowed once or twice watering will not be needed as often. Gradually scale watering back to normal lawn watering intervals.

Watering Your Lawn –

Established lawns should be given 1/2 – 1 inch of water per week. Applying that amount with one application per week or split between two applications is ideal. Some soil types may not accept that much at once or may not hold moisture for that long. You should always try to water “deeper” less often rather than frequent “light” watering. Placing an empty tuna fish can or similar container out on the lawn during watering is a good way to determine how long you need to water, to apply the appropriate amount of water. This will force the turf to develop a stronger, deeper root system which in turn will make for a healthier, more disease resistant lawn. The best time to water established lawns is in the morning. Watering in the evening can cause disease problems.

Fertilizing –

Established lawns should be fertilized regularly throughout the season. Since lawns are mowed frequently, grass needs more nutrients than other plants we grow in order to maintain the desired color and vigor we want. Depending on the quality of lawn you desire, a minimum of two applications of fertilizer are needed

with 3 or 4 giving you much better results. This is based on a granular application, if using a liquid foliar fertilizer the application would need to be much more frequent. Keep in mind that not all fertilizers are created equal. You want a fertilizer that has been blended to address local soil needs and an application schedule that takes into account the local climate. Refer to Sunnyside Garden's handout on our 3-step fertilizer program for details on the products we carry (including our own custom blended fertilizers) and when to apply them.

Weed Control –

Weeds in new lawns can be sprayed once the lawn has been mowed 3 to 4 times. Weeds in established lawns can be treated when they are actively growing. In most cases this is in the spring and early fall. Trying to kill weeds when it is too cold (below 60 degrees) or too hot (above 90 degrees) can lead to poor results or damage to surrounding landscape. Check with Sunnyside Gardens for the correct weed killer for your specific application. For hard to control weeds, apply weed killer twice, 10 to 14 days apart, mixing spreader sticker with the weed killer. A spreader sticker makes the spray solution cover better and hold on to the leaves of the weeds. Spraying the weeds down with water before spraying will help also. This cleans the dust off the leaf surface, allowing for the weed killer to penetrate better. Simply fertilizing a lawn will make it more vigorous and thicker, and will be more likely to choke out weeds. If you can kill weeds before they go to seed, you will have far fewer weeds in your lawn the next year.

Maintenance Tips –

Sharpen the blade. Keep the mower blades sharp throughout the season. Dull blades rip the grass tips instead of cutting. This makes the lawn look off-color and promotes disease problems.

Don't mow too much at once. As a rule of thumb, never mow more than 2 or 3 inches of grass off of the top at any one time. This causes stress to the lawn.

Rake your lawn occasionally. Whether by hand, or by power rake, your lawn will benefit from being raked. This removes thatch build up, reduces harboring of disease and can also help reduce mushrooms (by removing twigs and small sticks that can work themselves into the soil).

Rake up your leaves. Unless they are finely chopped, leaves and grass don't mix. Letting leaves lay on your lawn for extended periods can cause thin spots or even completely kill out an area if they are thick enough.

Be cautious of compaction. Compacted soils are really the only thing besides weeds and insects that would keep your lawn from being thick and free of thin spots when cared for. Periodically aerate in the spring or fall, or spray with a co-polymer spray (changes the way soil particles are held together). This eliminates compaction and the lack of oxygen in the soil. Avoid walking on your lawn when it's wet and do not drive on it, if that can be avoided.

Mow at the correct height. Never mow your lawn closer than 1" from the ground. You will inevitably "scalp" areas and cause many more problems. As a rule, mow closer in the spring and fall (1-2") and taller in the summer (3"). Keep your lawn mowed frequently during periods of high humidity and rainfall to prevent disease.

It pays to "insure" your lawn. Some things are put on the lawn without any sign of what you are treating for. Such is the case with pre-emergence for weeds and grub / billbug control. It pays to invest in these two products each year. Like buying insurance, you never really know if what you are buying will be needed, but once you don't do it, you could end up with a mess on your hands. Much of the time it is much easier to prevent than to control once it has started. There are lots of advantages to getting on a regular do-it-yourself lawn care program, see Sunnyside Gardens, for timing and product suggestions.