

West Virginia University

LAWN CARE AND MAINTENANCE

Many good lawns deteriorate and become unattractive because simple maintenance procedures are overlooked. Proper maintenance is not expensive, (though requiring a certain amount of time) and consists of four important steps: 1. Regular fertilization with the recommended type and amount of fertilizer based on a recent soil analysis. 2. Regular mowing at the proper height. 3. Adequate watering. 4. Control of lawn weeds, disease, and insects.

FERTILIZATION

Your County Extension Agent will provide you with soil sampling instructions and a mailer to get a free analysis from the WVU Soil Testing Lab.

The amount and type of fertilizer needed will depend upon soil conditions, the grass variety and fertilizers previously applied. A recommended general fertilization program might be as follows: October-12 lbs. of 10-20-20 per 1000 sq. ft.; early May-3 lbs. ammonium nitrate per 1000 sq. ft.; mid-June-3 lbs. ammonium nitrate per 1000 sq. ft.; late July-3 lbs. ammonium nitrate per 1000 sq. ft. However, you are wise to follow the more specific recommendations based on a recent soil analysis. NOTE: Ureaformaldehyde (Ureaform) may be used in lieu of ammonium nitrate. Apply in the spring or late summer at the rate of 5 pounds per 1000 sq. ft.

The heaviest application of fertilizer is made in the fall to stimulate root development. The best time is between the middle of August to the end of September. If applications are not made during this period, it would be advisable to wait until after Thanksgiving. The reason is that cold spells often occur during this time and the turf is dormant. Then there are warm periods and the turf begins to actively grow again and unless mowing is continued the excessive growth makes ideal conditions for the development of snow mold.

Applications of nitrogen are spread throughout the growing season to minimize sudden flushes of growth in the spring and fall. (It is often difficult to adjust the mowing schedule to accommodate these periods of rapid growth.) Spreading the applications over the season also helps keep the grass green in summer in addition to keeping sandy soils supplied with the nitrogen that leaches readily.

An even distribution of fertilizer is important. Therefore, a spreader should be used if possible. If fertilizer is to be broadcast by hand, divide the fertilizer into two equal parts. Broadcast the first half while walking in a north-south course and the remaining half while walking east-west. NOTE: Lawns should be dry when fertilizer is applied and then watered well.

LIMING

An application of 60 to 75 pounds of ground limestone (or 50 lbs. hydrated lime) per 1000 sq. ft. every 3 to 5 years should be adequate. It is advisable, however, to have a soil test made to determine the exact amount needed. (A soil test should be made every 3 to 5 years.) If lime is needed, it should be applied in late fall or early spring. Caution should be taken not to apply more than 150 pounds of lime per 1000 sq. ft. at any one time. If more is required, divide the amount into two equal parts and apply the first half immediately. In sandy soils the second half may be applied the next year but in heavy clay soils, the remaining lime need not be applied for two to three years.

MOWING

Bluegrasses, which are used predominantly in West Virginia, require a mowing height of 1½ to 2 inches. Mowing too close will result in a poor stand