

Lawn Maintenance Tips

Nothing is lovelier than a well-kept, lush, green carpet surrounding your home. It increases property value, makes the home more inviting, and enhances the neighborhood. It also takes work and effort to keep it looking as it should.

Most home owners have better things to do than spend every spare minute caring for their lawn. Fortunately, that isn't necessary. Not when care to maintain the yard is routinely provided, and paced to accommodate the caregiver's schedule.

The key to a successful, great looking lawn is routine, consistent care. The chore can become a pleasant habit instead of a dreaded duty with the right attitude and a little expertise. The secret is to do the right chore at the right time.

Provide care as a preventive measure, before it is needs it. Fertilize to *maintain* a green, healthy lawn; don't wait until it needs fertilizing. Feed it before it *needs* feeding, mow it before it *needs* mowing.

Some time-saving tips to maintain a healthy, green lawn:

1. Water deeply and thoroughly each week, at least 6 to 12 inches down into the soil. A bluish tint, slow growth, and lack of resiliency (footprints remain when grass is walked on) indicate the need for more water.
2. Keep grass strong and healthy with proper applications of fertilizer, fall and spring. This will insure resilience to traffic and drought, and keep the lawn a healthier green. Apply about 4 pounds of fertilizer per 1,000 feet. Slow release fertilizer is best.
3. In the spring fertilize with a ratio of 2:1:1 (ratio of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash). In the fall use 1:2:2 ratios for healthy root growth during the winter.
4. Treat weeds and pests immediately; don't wait for the problem to get out of hand.
5. As long as you mow the lawn often, clippings can stay on the lawn, adding nutrients and humus to the soil. This means

mowing every five days during the wet season, and every 10 or 14 during dry.

6. Use a lawn mower you can manipulate and change blade heights on easily.
7. Dull mower blades wound and tear the grass, so keep blades razor sharp by sharpening monthly. Sharpen blades more often if you hit hard objects like sticks or stones while mowing.
8. Reseed bare spots early fall or spring. First rake away debris and get rid of weeds. Loosen the soil 4 to 6 inches deep; add humus and a light application of fertilizer. Rake soil smooth, spread grass seed, and tamp down. Keep moist until seed germinates. At other times of the season, use sod or plugs to fill in bare spots.
9. An even lawn mows quicker and looks better. Humps and dips in the lawn created by freezing and thawing or other factors should be leveled. Raise low spots by spreading soil on top of the grass, no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch at a time. Smooth, and repeat twice a year until level. Remove humps by taking out wedges of turf in patches, 6 inches deep. Soak with water, and roll. Repeat spring and fall until the hump disappears.
10. Plant ground covers between the curbing and sidewalk instead of grass. This makes mowing the yard easier and quicker. The ground cover will also be easier to maintain there than grass.
11. Mulch and edging around tree bases will decrease mowing time, and help protect the bark on trees from possible damage caused by mowing too close to the trunks.

When mowing, cut grass diagonally, alternating directions each time. Not only does this prevent a striped look, it assures each blade of grass is cut sharply and evenly.

By providing your yard with consistent, routine care before it becomes necessary, and by using these other time-saving tips, your yard will stay looking lush and green. And time spent maintaining the yard will be minimized. A better looking lawn, with less time involvement equals more free time for you to enjoy a favorite pastime, or just relax. What could be better!

