



Lawn Care

How to care for one's lawn is a deeply personal and American past time. We at Step of Green feel lawn care is best determined after an interview with our clients, discussing their needs, desires and budget to determine the best approach. There are varying opinions on how long grass is allowed to grow, how often it should be cut, types of fertilizer, chemical or organic, watering or not, collecting or removing grass clippings, and so many more. Our approach to lawn care, which may be different from others, is to use practical and healthy solutions while working within most budget constraints.

Newly sodded Lawns

The fastest way to have a green lawn, but requires a long term commitment to establish well. Most sod in our area consists of Kentucky Bluegrass or similar cut into 21"x60" sheets. Sod can be installed as early as April if available all the way to early December. Soil should be tested for nutrient needs prior to installation, but more than likely will need a phosphorous high nutrient supplement (see Fertilization). Watering requirements will vary due to heat, wind and humidity although basic requirements are .5 to 1.5 inches of water per week. The soil should remain damp, not wet, adjust as necessary upon review. We find light frequent applications of water during the week (preferably twice but at least once a day for 2 weeks) are much more productive than heavy applications once per week. Increase watering length if there are several days of high temperatures, low relative humidity, sunny and windy. To reduce certain turf diseases and insect damage watering should be done in early morning, early afternoon or just prior to the highest heat period of the day, never after dusk. After two weeks sod should begin rooting, begin to reduce watering to a minimum of 1 inch a week (during a period of 3-4 days a week) until end of growing seasons.

Newly Seeded Lawn

Sod may be the fastest, but seeding a new lawn is by far the strongest and sustainable. New seed should be based on the microclimate needs of your property, is it shady or sunny determine the mix of grass seed. Although Bluegrass is the predominant species sold there are several variations of perennial grasses mixed it to accommodate the varying lawn needs. Before laying seed, a soils test should be performed to assure the basic organic elements are introduced to a freshly tilled and prepared bed. We recommend applying seed with an organic tactifier to assist in seed to soil contact as well as aid in initial moisture retention. Keeping the new seed moist is crucial and may require you to water 2-3 times per day, depending on the weather conditions. Seed germination could take anywhere from 2-4 weeks, all depending on temperature and your water practices. The first few mowings should not occur until grass is averaging over 4" in height and clippings should be bagged. We don't recommend weed control or pre-emergent should be used until the lawn has been mowed for at least for 2 months. This will insure that the grass seed has all germinated and has had time to harden off. If you do choose to use weed control or pre-emergent applications please consider an organic solution.

Mowing Frequency

Some turf enthusiasts recommend a lawn should be mowed every 4-5 days in the initial growing season then taper off accordingly based on watering, air temperatures and humidity. We take the approach; do

not to remove more than 1/3 of the total leaf surface of grass at any one mowing. Once a week is generally acceptable, but more often will not harm the lawn as long as the mowing height remains the same from cut to cut. Removing more than 1/2 of total leaf surface can severely shock the grass plant by decreasing its ability to support the underground portions of the plant. Mowers blades should be sharpened a minimum of once preferably twice a season. We do not recommend picking up clippings, they benefit in mulching and providing nutrients to continued lawn growth. Our mowers are sharpened monthly, even weekly at times to assure small fast decomposing grass clippings.

Established Lawns

Established lawns need regular mowing and care as described above. Existing lawns should be put on an organic or chemical fertilization program that will maintain adequate nutrient ratios. See Fertilization for details, but remember over fertilizing will not make it work faster it will only be money wasted and excessive nutrient runoff. Watering should be determined based on community requirements (limitations), personal preference to lawn growth and health of lawn. In the end the style, color and health of your lawn is based on amount of attention and care put forth by the owner.