

Establishment:

What is the best type of grass for Nebraska lawns?

Recommended cool season grasses are Kentucky bluegrass, turf-type tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and fine-leaved fescues. Recommended warm season grasses are Buffalograss, zoysiagrass, and blue grama.

Cool Season Turfgrasses for Nebraska: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/horticulture/g1016.htm>

Turfgrass Cultivars for Nebraska: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/horticulture/nf65.htm>

Is there a turfgrass that will grow well in heavy shade?

The fine-leaved fescues (creeping red, hard and chewings) perform the best in shade if soils are well-drained and not overwatered.

When the best time to seed a lawn?

Cool season grasses like Kentucky bluegrass (KBG) and tall fescue are best established in late summer or early fall. Ideally, by September 15 for tall fescue and by October 15 for KBG. Cool season grasses can be established in early spring. Warm season grasses like Buffalograss and zoysiagrass are best established in late spring or early summer.

Irrigation:

How often should a lawn be watered?

Irrigation frequency varies depending on the time of the season, turfgrass species, soil type, amount of shade, and other factors. Look for signs of wilting before applying water and avoid regularly scheduled watering with an automatic system. A darker color and footprints remaining after walking across the lawn are signs turfgrass needs water.

How much water should be applied to lawns?

Irrigate long enough to wet the soil to a depth of 4 to 6 inches without having water run off the lawn. You might need to water two days in a row to achieve this. To determine depth of watering, insert a screwdriver into the turf after irrigating to determine how deep the soil has been moistened. As a rule, KBG requires 1 inch of water a week in spring and fall and 1.5 inches of water in summer.

When is the best time to water the lawn?

Early morning (4 a.m. to 8 a.m.) is the best time to water. Wind and evaporative losses are low, application efficiency is high, distribution is best; and grass leaves will dry quickly which can reduce disease problems.

Will it harm the lawn to water at midday when its hot?

Midday watering is not harmful, but it's inefficient and should be avoided.

Fertilization:

Will it harm the lawn to fertilize when it's hot?

Cool season grasses, like Kentucky bluegrass, should not be fertilized from July 1 to late August when stressed by hot temperatures.

When is the best time to fertilize a lawn?

The best time to fertilize a cool season turfgrass is late fall, timed with the last mowing. For higher maintenance lawns, other times to fertilize are late April, mid to late June and early September.

What is the best type of fertilizer for a lawn?

The fertilizer label has a series of numbers, such as 12-3-6. This is an analysis of the percentage of nutrients in the fertilizer. The numbers represent nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium in that order. A fertilizer with a ratio of 4:1:2 is most often recommended. Fertilizers with a slow release nitrogen source, or a combination of slow and fast release sources, is best. Examples of fast release sources are ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulfate and urea. Slow release sources are milorganite, sulfur-coated urea and urea formaldehyde.

Why is my lawn yellow?

There are a number of factors that cause yellowing. One cause in the Great Plains is iron chlorosis, usually caused by high pH soils that tie up iron so it becomes unavailable to plants. Poorly drained or overwatered soils and some diseases are other causes of yellowing.

Mowing:

How soon can a newly seeded lawn be mowed?

The first mowing after establishment should occur as soon as the grass is high enough to mow at optimal height.

At what height should the lawn be mowed?

Optimal mowing height depends on the turfgrass species and the time of year.

Turfgrass	Spring	Summer	Fall
Kentucky Bluegrass	1.5 – 2.0"	3.0 – 3.5"	2.0"
Tall Fescue	2.0- 3.0"	3.0 – 3.5"	2.0 – 3.0"
Fine-leaved Fescues	2.0"	3.0"	2.0"
Buffalograss	1.0 – 2.0"	1.0 – 2.0"	1.5 – 2.0"
Zoysiagrass	1.0 – 2.0"	1.0 – 2.0"	1.5 – 2.0"

Does it matter what time of day the lawn is mowed?

During hot, dry summer days, mowing can be a stress for cool season turfgrass. Avoid mowing during the heat of the day when the lawn is under the greatest amount of drought and heat stress. Use very sharp mower blades and remove no more than one-third of the blade at each mowing.

Power Raking/Core Aeration:

Which is better for the lawn, power raking or aeration?



Each practice serves a purpose and is beneficial when needed. Power raking removes thatch and should be done when the true thatch layer exceeds ½ inch. Up to ½ inch of thatch is beneficial. When thatch exceeds ½ inch, it becomes detrimental to turfgrass. Thatch builds up quicker on highly maintained lawns and will occur even if grass clippings are caught. To measure thatch, cut a wedge of grass and soil from the turf and measure the reddish brown layer of organic matter between the green grass and soil. Core aeration reduces soil compaction and is very beneficial to turfgrass. Core aerate lawns about once every three years. Turfgrass growing on heavier soils and which receive a lot of traffic will need more frequent aeration.

Thatch Prevention and Control: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/horticulture/g751.htm>

When is the best time to power rake or aerate?

These practices are best done when turfgrass is actively growing to enhance recovery and maximize root growth. Ideally, there should be 30 good growing days following these practices. For cool season turfgrass, like Kentucky bluegrass, power rake or aerate in April or September.

Weed Control:

I applied a herbicide for crabgrass last spring. I still have crabgrass. Why?

Crabgrass is a warm season annual grass. It germinates from seed each year after soils begin to warm. Annual grasses are controlled with a preemergence herbicide applied prior to seed germination. However, if they are applied too early, the herbicide may be gone before some seed germinates. If you apply a herbicide and still have crabgrass, some causes may be applying the herbicide too early in the spring, prior to April 20; power raking or aerating after preemergence herbicides are applied; or incorrectly applying the herbicide such as using the wrong rate. If you applied the herbicide correctly and at the right time, a second application six to eight weeks after the first application may be needed.

When is the best time to control dandelions?

If you control dandelions by digging, digging them when they are blooming is most effective. The plant uses stored resources to bloom and may have less to recover from digging if a good portion of the root is removed. Fall is the best time to apply a herbicide for dandelion control. More of the herbicide will be translocated into the root and the dandelion will go into winter in a weakened condition.

My neighbors lawn does not seem to have any weeds, but I battle weeds all the time? What am I doing wrong?

The best defense against weeds is a thick, well-managed lawn that will compete with weeds. Check your mowing, irrigation and fertilization practices to determine if you are maintaining the lawn correctly. Do you need to power rake or aerate? What weeds do you have? Are these weeds a common problem under certain conditions, i.e. heavy, wet soils, and can you correct the problem in your lawn?

Kentucky Bluegrass Lawn Care Calendar: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/horticulture/g517.htm>

Tall Fescue Care Calendar: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/horticulture/g558.htm>