Lawn Care Calendar

Seasonal tips for lawn care

Early spring: Test soil; Rake in compost (for organic lawn care); Aerate soil if re-seeding, re-seed; Mow at 3 inches or higher

Late Spring: Mow at 3 inches or higher; Compost clippings if there are dandelions

Summer: Fertilize; Mow at 2 inches or higher; Water once per week if there is no precipitation

Early fall: Mow at 2 inches or higher; Re-seed with indigenous grasses (for organic lawn care)

Late fall: Mow at 2 inches or higher; Compost clippings if you have a lot of leaves or debris

Dutchess County Soil and Water Conservation District

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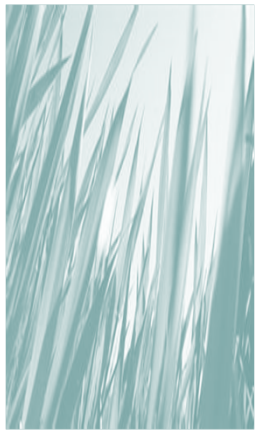
Healthy Lawn Tips



Fertilizing and maintaining your lawn while reducing nutrient runoff

August 2011

Caring for your healthy lawn…

"0" phosphorus in fertilizer sold in New York state as of 2012

Fertilizing

Fertilizer bags indicate N-P-K nutrient content. Save money by measuring the surface area of your lawn to determine how much fertilizer to purchase.

N (nitrogen): Choose a product with low nitrogen or slow-release forms of nitrogen such as urea, formaldehyde, IBDU or sulfur-coated urea. Aim to apply 1 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn area.

P (phosphorus): As of 2012, phosphorus-containing fertilizer is no longer for sale in New York State. Phosphorus application is also restricted in New York State – only allowed if you are establishing a new lawn or if a test shows that the lawn is P-deficient. Soil tests provide results for the concentration of P and potassium (K). If a soil test indicates that your lawn is already high in P and K, choose a fertilizer with 21-0-0 or 46-0-0. If your soil has low P and K concentrations, choose a fertilizer with a higher K ratio such as 23-0-6.

Watering

Water in the early morning if there is less than one inch of rain per week.

Mowing

Mow at 3 inches (or more) above the ground surface during spring and fall and at 2 inches during summer. Cut off no more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a time. Leave grass clippings on the lawn in order to return nutrients to the lawn. In late spring, when dandelions set seed or in fall when there are too many leaves on the ground, consider bagging and composting clippings. Use a mulching mower.

Aeration

Aerate your lawn (via tiller or raking) if it is compacted or has a thick layer of thatch to improve the lawn's capacity for water absorption.

Clean up

Pick up any extra fertilizer or grass clippings that might accidentally be left on the pavement so that the fertilizer and clippings do not end up in local waterbodies causing excessive algal growth.

Plug from an aerated lawn.

Organic Lawn Care

Organic lawn care methods minimize the need for chemical fertilizers. Methods include raking compost into the lawn, seeding with indigenous grasses and applying earthworms and natural pesticides. Grassroots Healthy Lawn Program provides recommendations on organic lawn care practices. For more information visit www.grassrootsinfo.org/ghlpindex.html

Weeds, Pests and Soil tests

Cornell Cooperative Extension in Dutchess County provides recommendations for weed, insect and disease control on lawns. They also provide a soil test kit ($20). For more information visit www.ccedutchess.org

Lawns need nutrients in fertilizer to stay green and healthy. However, when too much fertilizer is applied, it can wash off the lawn during rain events. Nutrients then flow through storm sewers into local waterbodies where they become an energy source for algae and aquatic weeds. Use these tips to keep your local waterbodies clean while enjoying a healthy lawn.