Ten Steps to a Good Lawn

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service
mer. Two sprays with Dylox, Dieldrin or Spectracide will stop activity. Best time for control, however, is mid-May to kill larvae of the first brood.

STEP 8. MAKE ROOM FOR NEW LEAVES

In early spring, remove the brown tips of old growth to manicure your lawn and let new growth show earlier. Close mowing plus sweeping, then fertilizing makes a spring lawn the brightest. Power rakes and thinners do a good job of thinning. In early fall, they can reduce crabgrass and weeds as well as remove thatch and old clippings.

STEP 9. PROTECT AGAINST DISEASES THAT KILL LEAVES

Fungicide use is time-consuming, expensive and involves considerable tedium in management. KNOW the lawn disease and the needed chemical first; then apply BEFORE damage becomes severe. Don't encourage lawn diseases by over-water, over-fertilizing or mowing too short.

STEP 10. KILL UNWANTED PATCHES

In fact, one might kill or remove everything and start over. Always be cautious in trying selective killing, which may disfigure and discolor for long periods. Re-sodding with a new variety may be preferred.

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Ten Steps to a Good Lawn

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1. Use adapted grasses—to survive extremes in climate.
2. Mow regularly—at 2" height for bluegrass; ¾" for zoysia, bent, bermuda.
3. Fertilize—two or more times annually.
4. Kill broadleaf weeds—with 2,4-D every two years.
5. Irrigate—to maintain green leaves already produced.
6. Reduce crabgrass competition—by preventing or killing.
7. Prevent insect damage—to leaves or roots.
8. Make room for new leaves—remove thatch, excess clippings.
9. Protect against diseases—that kill leaves and stems.
10. Kill patches—of clover, creeping bent, etc.

Remember, a good (rootzone) soil for adequate moisture and nutrient storage supports all steps.

How good is your lawn today? What will it be like next year? Are you confused with the vast array of products and services “guaranteed” to give you a perfect lawn? Do you want a simple, understandable lawn program—one that can give continuity and success, even with modest time and money?

These ten steps to a good lawn have evolved from 20 years of work with turf. Notice that each step supports the ones above it. A lawn enthusiast may be interested in all ten steps and the many products available to accomplish them. Others would be concerned with just the first six; and still other, only the first two. Each reader can select just how far up the steps he wants to go. Also, if some lawn product or piece of equipment attracts his attention, he can determine where it fits into his continuing program.

STEP 1. USED ADAPTED GRASSES

Bluegrasses are favorites throughout the Midwest. Common, Delta, Newport, Park, Windsor, Merion, Pennstar, Sodco and Fylking bluegrass varieties may be blended for greater disease resistance and longer vigor. Often, redtop or ryegrass are added for early growth. Red fescue may be added for shade. Always buy the better quality seed, based on purity and bluegrass percentages. Zoysia (vegetative planting) may provide a dense cover on droughty soil in sunny areas in southern Indiana.

STEP 2. MOW REGULARLY AT PROPER HEIGHT

At a 2-inch height of cut, bluegrass lawns will better withstand disease damage and weed competition than if cut close. The newer, more disease-resistant varieties can be cut at 1 to 1½ inches. Bent, Zoysia and bermuda grass should be cut to less than 1 inch. Sharpen your mower blades monthly.

STEP 3. FERTILIZE TWO OR MORE TIMES ANNUALLY

Your lawn is a mixture of dead, dying and growing blades of grass, and you want to keep the green ones predominating. This means feeding the lawn at least twice a year using a fertilizer that is high in nitrogen, low in phosphorous and medium in potassium, such as 10-3-7, 12-4-8, 16-3-9, and 24-7-14.

Many lawn fertilizers today are non-burning, slow release, light weight granular types. These can be applied, using a push-type spreader, anytime the grass leaves are dry—without damage. But, for safety where there is wear, and for quick response, water turf immediately.

STEP 4. KILL BROADLEAF WEEDS

Treat anytime, but the best time is mid-fall. Use the amine form of 2,4-D, which is available—as a liquid for sprayers; in dry form or in fertilizers for spreaders; in a wax bar for pulling over the lawn; as a "wee stick," both wet or wax; and even in aerosol cans. Take your pick, but apply uniformly and according to label directions.

STEP 5. IRRIGATE TO KEEP THE LAWN GREEN

Water, of course, is essential to keep turf green and growing; but watering can be expensive. Therefore, some prefer to let their lawns go dormant when drouth occurs. Do water enough, however, to insure fall recovery. Water is not a substitute for fertilizer.

STEP 6. PREVENT CRABGRASS

A number of proven crabgrass preventers are now available at local garden stores. To be effective, any of these products must be present near the soil surface in TOXIC amounts when crabgrass seedlings start. Therefore, timely, adequate and uniform application is the key to success. You may treat the entire lawn or only a portion. Without crabgrass competition, it's easier to keep bluegrass dense.

STEP 7. PREVENT INSECT DAMAGE

Insect control is easy and not often necessary, but knowing how and what to do is important. Treat for grubs in April using insecticides such as Dielodrin, Aldrin, Chlordane or Baylox. This should give control for 3 to 5 years. Occasionally, sob webworm will eat grass leaves in sum-