

Healthy Lawns for Healthy Families

Calendar for Basic Organic Lawn Care



March-April

Test soil (www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/soilbrocha.htm)

Leaves: use mulch blade and leave in place or remove and use for compost if excessive

Sharpen mower blade

First mowing of year should be at about 2 inches and remove clippings

Subsequent mowing: raise mower blade to leave grass at 3 inches

Only remove 1/3 of blade at a time

Re-seed bare patches and top dress with compost to establish grass

Add amendments based on soil test results and whether have mostly trees or lawn to consider

Lower pH may better for trees (fine fescues and native grasses will tolerate lower pH, too)

For lawn, if pH is <6.8, add quick release dolomitic lime (contains magnesium but no lead)
if magnesium is already high, use calcitic lime

Top-dress with ¼" compost or add slow release fertilizer (low NPK ratios)

Apply corn gluten as pre-emergent for weed control (*do not apply same time as seeding*)

Contains 10% N-establish max per year and apply no more than 3 times at 1 lbN/1000sq ft

May-June

Keep mower blades sharp and leave grass at 3 inch finished height

Only remove 1/3 of blade at a time

Check for weeds

Pull by hand or treat with mixture of 1 part lemon juice to 2 parts vinegar

Re-seed bare spots, top dress with ¼" compost

Leave clippings on the lawn

Minimize lawn watering to encourage deep roots

July-August

Check for insect damage

For grubs, Treat with milky spore (soil T should be >60°) or add beneficial nematodes

Keep grass at 3" tall

Water only as needed

Allow grass to go dormant during drought

September-October

Best time to seed

Fertilize with slow release, natural organic fertilizer or top-dress with ¼" compost

Evaluate and remove thatch (not usually a problem unless too much N is used)

Best done in fall to not invite crabgrass!

Aerate if necessary

November

Continue to mow while grass grows

Mulch or remove leaves- use for compost

Partners in the ***Healthy Lawns for Healthy Families*** project include the Towns of Acton, Ayer, Boxborough, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, Groton, Harvard, Littleton, and Westford. Garden center participants include Jones Farm and Laughton's Nursery-Chelmsford, Eric's Greenhouse and Garden Center-Westford, Butterbrook Farms-Acton, Bird House Garden Center-Boxborough, Mahoney's Garden Center -Concord, Cupp & Cupp Corp. and Cataldo Nurseries-Littleton, and The Green Guy. Materials developed under a grant from the Toxics Use Reduction Institute at UMass Lowell.