



Lawn Best Management Practices Checklist

Know Your Grass

It is important to identify what kind of grass you have. The proper timing of lawn maintenance, amount of fertilizer and mowing height vary by grass species. Cool season grasses (bluegrass, fescue, and ryegrass) are green for most of the year in our area but will brown and go dormant in the summer. Warm season grasses (Bermuda and zoysia) are green in summer but go dormant in cooler weather.

General Practices

- Know the square footage of your lawn.
- Test your soil to determine existing pH and nutrients.
- Calibrate your spreader before applying fertilizers, soil amendments or pesticides.
- Fertilize at a time of year appropriate for the type of grass you have. The amount of fertilizer varies with conditions, level performance desired and type of grass. Contact your Extension office for assistance.
- Apply lime following the recommendations given in your soil test report. Lime can be applied any time of the year except when the ground is frozen. Lime is NOT annual maintenance. After applications have been made according to your soil test, do not lime again until the soil has been retested in 3 years.
- Core-aerate the lawn at a time of year appropriate for the type of grass you have. Mow the lawn before aerating, and be sure soil is moist to a 3 to 4 inch depth. Lawns should be thoroughly watered two days prior to aerating, so tines can penetrate deeper into the soil and soil cores easily fall out of the tines.
- Apply ¼ inch of compost to the lawn annually to improve soil structure.
- Mow routinely during the growing season, and often enough to avoid removing more than 1/3 of the grass blade at each mowing.
- Sharpen mower blades. Dull mower blades tear and damage the grass leaf blades, making them more susceptible to disease and insect attack.
- Recycle grass clippings. Grass clippings are 85% water and provide free fertilizer.
- Rake or mow fallen leaves in November. Layered, wet leaves can damage turfgrass and create an environment for lawn diseases.

Weed, Insect and Disease Control

- Identify weeds, insects and diseases before attempting a control. Submit samples to your Extension office for identification and control recommendations.
- Use spot treatments for weeds rather than broadcast applications where possible.
- If you choose to apply pre-emergent crabgrass preventer in spring, choose a product that does not contain fertilizer. Read the crabgrass preventer label, as many products require multiple applications.
- Physically remove pests when possible.
- When a pesticide is necessary, choose the least intrusive to protect beneficial insects.
- Check for grubs by cutting three sides of a 1 foot square of sod. Using the uncut edge as a hinge, search through the soil at a 1 inch depth for tiny grubs ¼ to ½ inch long. If 8-10 grubs are found, treatment will be necessary.
- Control grubs in August when the grubs are young and most susceptible to insecticides.

- **Carefully read and follow label directions for any pesticides you choose to use.**

Irrigation

- Consider allowing cool season grass to go into dormancy over the summer to conserve water and reduce stress on the grass. Summer irrigated cool season turf requires almost 625 gallons of water per 1,000 sq. ft.
- If you choose to irrigate, irrigate infrequently (1-2 x/week) as conditions require, and be consistent.
- If you choose to irrigate cool season grass, calibrate your irrigation system to deliver approximately 1 inch of water per week (when needed) while avoiding runoff.
- Irrigate early in the morning (between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. is ideal), rather than late at night, to minimize evaporation losses and allow the grass to dry off before evening.

	Cool Season Turf Bluegrass, Fescues, Ryegrass	Warm Season Turf Bermuda, Zoysia
Fertilization	Mostly in the fall, though spring fertilization may be appropriate	Summer
When to Aerate	Early fall	Late spring-early summer
When to Add Compost	Ideally, just after you aerate	Ideally, just after you aerate
When to Seed	Fall – earlier the better	Late spring-early summer
Dethatching	Dethatching is best done in early fall. This is only needed if thatch gets ½” thick. Rarely needed unless bluegrass is the predominant grass	Dethatching is best done in May/June. This is only needed when thatch gets ½” thick. An intensive fertilizer regimen will increase the likelihood of thatch build-up.
Summer Irrigation	In dormancy – none If irrigated – 1 inch per week For all cool season lawns in extreme drought – ½ inch every few weeks	Usually - Not need In extreme drought, ½ inch every few weeks
Mowing Heights	Kentucky Bluegrass: 2-3½” Perennial Ryegrass: 2-3½” Tall Fescue: 3-4” Fine Fescues: 2-3½”	Bermuda: 1½” to 2½” Zoysia: ½” to 1½” Mowing at 1 inch or lower requires a reel mower instead of a standard rotary mower.

For more information, call the York County/City of Poquoson VCE Help Desk at 757-890-4940 or send an email to yk.pg.mg@gmail.com or visit our website at <http://www.yorkcounty.gov/vce>.