

Grass Cycling

"Cut it high and let it fly." That's one of the secrets to good lawn care, helping to protect the Chesapeake Bay, and saving money. Pam King, of the Cooperative Extension Service, puts it this way, "Why bother putting a lot of fertilizer on your lawn in the spring when just the right amount in the fall will do. What may happen by over fertilizing in the spring is this: the grass will grow very quickly and succulently, you will have to cut and water it more often, it will be damaged more by the summer heat, and the excess nitrogen may pollute the Bay...Just say no."

Mow grass often during the spring and fall. Set your mower high to a height of 3 inches for tall Fescue lawns. This promotes a healthier lawn, suppresses weeds and the lawn will require less water. It can reduce weeds by 50 to 80 percent and help the grass survive hot summer weather. Don't remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a time.

Don't collect lawn and bag clippings...they're natural fertilizer. Use a mulching mower or a side shoot mower and leave the clippings on the lawn. **THIS DOES NOT CAUSE THATCH.**

Let the lawn go dormant in the summer. It will come back in the fall when it is cooler and it rains; water is not cheap in Charles County, save it for drinking.

Think about alternative landscaping. If you don't have so much grass, it won't take as long to cut.

Take a soil test and apply only the amount of lawn fertilizer that is required. Test kits are available through the Cooperative Extension Service for \$5 by calling 301-753-8195. If needed, the fall is also the time to seed your lawn.



Composting

Composting is the most practical and convenient way to handle your yard wastes. It can be easier and cheaper than bagging these wastes or taking them to the transfer station. Adding compost will improve your soil and the plants growing in it. If you have a garden, a lawn, trees, shrubs, or even planter boxes, you have a use for compost.

By using compost, you return organic matter to the soil. Organic matter improves plant growth by helping to break up heavy clay soils, giving soil better texture by improving the water and nutrient-holding capacity of sandy soils, and by adding essential nutrients to any soil. Improving your soil is the first step toward improving the health of your plants. Healthy plants help make our communities healthier places to live.

What Can I Compost

Anything that was once alive can be composted. However some organic wastes should not be put into home composting systems. Do not add meat and grease which can become rancid.

Good Things to Compost in Yard Waste Bins

- Grass Clippings
- Old Potting Soil
- Leaves
- Twigs
- Flowers
- Annual Weeds
- Old Plants

How Can I Use Compost?

Compost can be dug into the soil to enrich flower and vegetable gardens; top-dressed to improve the soil around trees and shrubs; and as a potting soil amendment for houseplants and planter boxes and, when screened, as part of a seed-starting mix or lawn top-dressing. Before they decompose, chipped woody wastes make excellent mulch or path material. After they decompose, these same woody wastes will add texture to garden soils.



LAWN



Care

in
CHARLES COUNTY
MARYLAND

This pamphlet is brought to you by the Charles County Commissioners and the Cooperative Extension Service

Management Calendar for Bluegrass Fescue Lawns

Start in the fall

SEPTEMBER

- Seed or sod new lawns. Prepare soil well, adding several inches of organic material, like compost. Keep moist until well rooted. Turf-type tall Fescue varieties are recommended. (Recommended varieties list available—Fact Sheet AM 77)
- Rake and overseed established lawns if needed. Keep well watered.

- Fertilize according to soil test results or apply one (1) pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet (10 pounds of 10-6-4 per 1000 square feet.

- Apply limestone according to soil test results or apply 50 pounds of ground limestone per 1000 square feet once every 3 years.



- Control broadleaf weeds, if needed. (See AM 79 – Broad Leaf Weed Control Fact Sheet)
- Mow often. Proper lawn management should prevent thatch buildup (dead grass blades) even if clippings are not collected.

OCTOBER

- Apply second fertilizer application (as above).
- Rake and remove fallen leaves from lawn regularly.
- Continue to mow regularly.

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER

- Continue to mow and rake leaves, as needed.

JANUARY–FEBRUARY

- Plan spring tasks
- Sharpen mower.

Management Calendar for

MARCH

- For best control of crabgrass and other weeds, maintain a healthy, thick lawn through proper seeding, fertilization and mowing. If needed, treat with pre-emergent herbicides for crabgrass control. Follow label directions—two applications may be required. Apply in mid to late March before crabgrass seeds germinate. Water in. Do not disturb soil surface after chemical application. (See AM 85 – Herbicides for Crabgrass Control in Turf Fact Sheet)

- Identify and control broadleaf weeds as needed. Spray formulations are most effective. Temperature should be between 55 and 85 degrees F. Follow label directions. (See AM 79 Fact Sheet)

- Monitor for disease symptoms, such as leaf spots and dying patches, throughout the year. See Fact Sheet AM 84 to diagnose.

APRIL–MAY

- Mow high, to 3 inches in height. Remove no more than 1/3 of the green leaf area at one time.

- Postemergence herbicides for crabgrass can be used when seedlings are very small. (See AM 85 Fact Sheet)

- Control broadleaf weeds, if needed.

- Dig or spot treat weed clumps with glyphosate (tradename: RoundUp) according to label directions throughout the growing season. This allows weed control with minimal pesticide use.

NEED MORE HELP?

**Call the Cooperative Extension Service
Home & Garden Information Center
1-800-342-2507**

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JUNE–JULY

- Check for Chinch Bugs. Remove the top and bottom from a coffee can and push it into the soil along the edge of dead or brown patches of grass. Fill the can with water and the small bugs will float to the surface. If bug counts exceed 10–15 per square foot, insecticide treatment may be warranted. (Call for more information).

- Water deeply (soak soil to 6 inches in depth—takes about 45 minutes of watering) in the morning, only when footprints show and grass is a blue-gray color. A lawn may turn brown and go into Summer dormancy, but most of it will recover with rain and cooler weather.

- Mow properly.

AUGUST

- Mow properly as needed.
- Water only if needed.
- Take a soil test—call for a kit.



- Check for Chinch Bugs. Control if needed.
- Check for Sod Webworms. Look in thatch for small excrement pellets and silk tubes in browned areas. Control if more than two webworms per square foot are found. (Call for a Fact Sheet on Sod Webworm.)

- Check for White Grubs (including Japanese Beetle grubs). Look in the soil under the grass. When grub counts exceed 3 per square foot, treatment may be needed. If an insecticide is used, water it in immediately and deeply. (Call for more information.)

- Use Milky Spore Disease for long term Japanese Beetle grub control. It must be used community-wide to be effective. Apply whenever the ground is not frozen.