



Lawn Care in One Easy Package

The following chart will help you care for your lawn. Your lawn will be healthy if the soil is kept healthy. This means you should have the soil pH (acidity level) tested every few years, fertilize if necessary in fall, mow the grass at a height of three inches or higher, and manage pests only when necessary. For more information, contact the Horticultural Diagnostic Lab at Cornell Cooperative Extension for specific fact sheets on these items.

Things to Do

March

Rake lawn to remove debris

April

Aeration and renovation seeding are best done in fall; aerate or seed large areas now only if necessary and your soil is dry enough to work. Be prepared to manage weeds. Consider sod for large areas.

Lime if indicated by soil pH test. (Liming may be done at any time as long as the soil is not frozen or the plants are not stressed by drought.)

Reseed small bare spots; seeds must be raked into loosened soil for good contact. Use high quality disease-resistant grass varieties. Shade mixes require **at least** four hours of direct sunlight, sun mixes **at least** six hours of direct sun. Overseed as needed to increase turf density.

Improve turf health and density to reduce crabgrass and other weed problems. If you have not reseeded and crabgrass has been a problem in past years, you may apply pre-emergent crabgrass killer when Forsythia bushes are in full bloom. *

Onion grass bulbs may be removed by digging with a hand trowel; use weed killer only if absolutely necessary.*

Begin mowing (3 inches or higher) when necessary. Leave short clippings on the lawn to reduce fertilizer needs and return organic matter to the soil (make sure they do not clump).

Hand pull or dig broad leaf weeds.

Wait until fall (early September to October) to fertilize, if needed.

May

Hand pull or dig broadleaf weeds; apply broadleaf weedkiller* as a last resort (late May).

Wait until fall to fertilize low maintenance lawns. Fertilize young, but established, high maintenance lawns if indicated by soil test around Memorial Day. Use a slow-release fertilizer. Compost-based fertilizers may reduce disease problems. Old, established lawns may not require fertilization.

If insect or disease problems occur, take a 12 x 12 inch sample of turf to Cooperative Extension for diagnosis. (There is a nominal fee.) Call ahead or see www.rocklandcce.org for sampling instructions.

June

During drought, to promote water conservation, choose between summer dormancy and watering. If you choose to water, apply a total of one inch of water weekly if no rain has occurred, or enough to make up an inch of water, if precipitation has been less than an inch. Water deeply, early in the morning, once or twice a week.

If you allow the lawn to go dormant, you will save a precious resource and money. The lawn will survive as long as it gets ¼ inch of water during a three-week period. Be prepared to reseed thin areas and manage weeds in the fall.

July

Do as little as possible – do not fertilize or apply pesticides in hot weather.

Keep equipment off the lawn and do not mow drought-stressed turf.

August

Grubs may be managed now, if necessary. Apply insecticide only if you can find more than eight to ten grubs per square foot of lawn.*

September

Preferred time to seed or sod bare spots, or to establish a new lawn is when the weather begins to cool (late August – early September). Seed must be planted or sod lain in loose soil, with good soil contact.

Use high quality disease-resistant grass varieties. Shade mixes require **at least** four hours of direct sunlight, sun mixes **at least** six hours of direct sun. Overseed as needed to increase turf density.

Preferred time to manage broadleaf weeds is in fall. Improve turf health and density to reduce weed competition. Use broadleaf weed killer as a last resort; apply near the first frost (mid to late October).

Fertilize high maintenance and young, but established, lawns if indicated by a soil test (around Labor Day). Old, established lawns may not require fertilization.

Preferred time to aerate, if needed.

October

October 1 is last chance for reliably successful seeding.

Sod may be laid until the temperature dips below 40 degrees.

Rake leaves off grass and add them to your compost pile. If you only have a small amount of leaves, you may shred them with a mulching mower and leave them on the lawn as you would grass clippings (make sure they do not clump). This will help to minimize weed problems.

November

Mow as long as grass is actively growing.

Protect our water resources – do not apply fertilizer in late fall.

Lime if indicated by soil test.

December to late May

Do not apply fertilizer, especially when the ground is frozen. New York State Law prohibits the application of lawn fertilizer between December 1 and April 1.

*Contact our diagnostic lab for the latest pesticide recommendations.

Source: Explore Cornell Home Gardening Lawn Care Library. www.explore.cornell.edu

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The information on pest management for New York State contained in this publication is dated January 2011. The user is responsible for obtaining the most up-to-date pest management information. Contact any Cornell Cooperative Extension county office or PMEP (<http://pmep.cce.cornell.edu>), the Cornell Cooperative Extension pesticide information website. The information herein is no substitute for pesticide labeling. The user is solely responsible for reading and following manufacturer's labeling and instructions.