



# Home Lawn Care Calendar

<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/washington>

This lawn care calendar summarizes maintenance practices and preferred timing for a healthy home lawn in Washington County. For additional free resources, see the listing at the end of this publication.

<b>KEY:</b> PPPP Indicates <b>preferable</b> times to carry out certain lawn care practices. ----- Indicates <b>acceptable</b> times to carry out certain lawn care practices.								
	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
<b>Fertilizing</b>		-----	---			PPPPPP	PPPP	PP
<b>Mowing</b>		-----						
<b>Watering</b>			-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	
<b>Aeration</b>		-----				PPPPPP	PP	
<b>Dethatching</b>		-----				PPPPPP		
<b>Weed Control</b>								
Broadleaf Weeds		-----	-----			PPPP	PPP	
Crabgrass			PP					
Preemergent	P							
Postemergent			-----					
<b>Seeding</b>		-----				PPPPPP		
<b>Sodding</b>	PPP	PPPP	PPP	-----	-----	P	PPPP	PPP

# Home Lawn Care Summary

## High or Low Maintenance Lawn?

Many lawn care problems arise from not understanding the management differences between a high maintenance lawn and a low maintenance lawn. The following table summarizes maintenance needs.

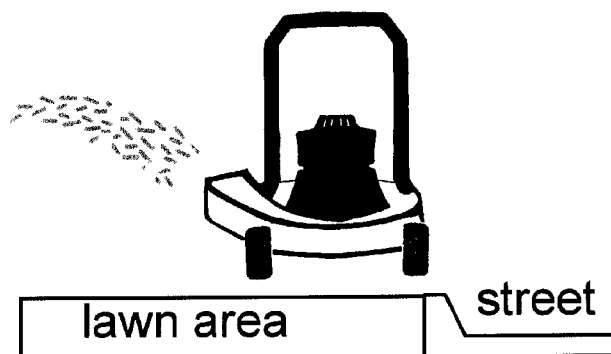
Low Maintenance	High Maintenance
common bluegrass and fescue typical of older (25+ years) and seeded lawns	hybrid bluegrass varieties typical of sodded and newer lawns
sun to shade <u>All lawns in shady areas are low maintenance.</u>	sun
summer watered <u>OR</u> summer dormant	summer watered
fertilized <u>fall only</u>	fertilized spring and fall
intolerant of traffic/play when under summer water stress	tolerant of high traffic/play

## Mowing

Lawn clippings and leaves mowed or swept onto the street are the major source of phosphorus pollution in urban lakes. Mow in a direction to prevent clippings from being blown onto the street, driveway and other hard surfaces. Sweep up grass clippings from streets and hard surfaces. Also leave an unmowed grass buffer strip edging all lakes, streams, ponds and wetlands.

Mow low maintenance lawns at a 2 to 3 1/2 inch height. Mow at 3 to 3 1/2 inches during summer stress periods. Mow often enough that only 1/3 of the grass height is removed.

Leaving the clippings on the lawn recycles nutrients back into the grass, saves mowing time and reduces fertilization costs.



*Keep Clippings Out of the Street!*

## When to Fertilize

Fall is the best time to fertilize. It strengthens the root system, thickens the turf and increases tolerance to stress. Spring fertilization of shady lawns or lawns that are allowed to go dormant in summer will lead to thinning of the turf.

When to Fertilize Home Lawns		
	Low Maintenance Lawns	High Maintenance Lawns
<b>Clippings left</b>	(1 lb. N/1000 sq. ft. per year) • September	(3 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft. per year) • late May • late August • late October
<b>Clippings removed</b>	(2 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft. per year) • late August • late October	(4 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft. per year) • late May • late August • late September • late October

## What kind of fertilizer?

Differences between natural and manufactured fertilizers include response time, application rate, and cost. Since the phosphate in both types of fertilizer binds to the soil particles, neither is a source of phosphorus pollution when properly applied.

The three numbers on a fertilizer bag give the percentage of nitrogen (N), phosphate (P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>), and potash (K<sub>2</sub>O). Application rate is based on the nitrogen percentage. At least 1/3 to 1/2 of the nitrogen fertilizer should be a slow-release or time-release type.

### **Most established lawns in Washington County need nitrogen and potassium (potash) only.**

Low potassium levels predispose the grass to many common diseases. Few lawns in our region need phosphorus (phosphate). Our soils are naturally high in phosphorus and nutrients recycled back to the lawn by not bagging will supply the phosphorus needs.

The standard application rate for manufactured fertilizers is 1 pound actual N per 1000 sq. ft. per application, (i.e., 10 lbs. fertilizer per 1000 sq. ft. with a 10% nitrogen fertilizer, or 5 lbs. fertilizer per 1000 sq. ft. with a 20% nitrogen fertilizer). An overdose of manufactured fertilizer has the potential to burn roots. On sandy soils, this rate may be split in half and applied twice as often.

With “organic” type fertilizers, the application rate will be higher. Consult the bag for specific information. “Organic” fertilizers typically release their nutrients over a 3-year period.

## Soil Compaction

Soil conditions, primarily soil compaction, account for 80% of plant problems in the urban landscape. Compaction suppresses lawn vigor while favoring weeds and disease problems. Aerating (removing plugs) once or twice a year (fall and spring) will help reduce soil compaction in an established lawn area.

The best time of year to aerate a lawn is late August to late September, as fewer weed seeds germinate this time of year.

## Pest Management

Lawn weed killers provide only temporary control if management problems that favor weeds are not addressed.

- Limited fertilizer -- A thick, actively growing turf chokes out most weeds.
- Aeration -- Soil compaction favors weeds and discourages lawn growth. Common lawn weeds (including annual bluegrass, black medic, chickweed, clover, crabgrass, knotweed, prostrate spurge, and plantain) thrive in compacted soils.
- Mowing -- A high mowing height (which shades out weeds) and frequent cutting discourages weeds.
- Watering -- Deep, infrequent watering will dry out many common shallow rooted lawn weeds.

Under Minnesota conditions, fungicides are not effective for disease control in home lawns. Attention to proper fertilization, watering, and reducing soil compaction is the key to disease control.

Common grass diseases associated with over-fertilization in the spring include Patch Diseases, Leaf Spot and Melting Out, and Snow Molds. Common grass diseases associated with under fertilization include Dollar Spot, Fairy Ring, Rust, and Striped Smut.

## Thatch

Thatch is the dark brown layer of dead and living grass tissues that develops between the soil surface and the green parts of the grass. Thatch levels thicker than 1/2” decrease needed oxygen and water infiltration into the root zone. With thatch problems, lawns thin out showing symptoms similar to common disease problems. Thatch also harbors disease organisms.

Leaving clippings on the ground is not a factor in thatch build-up. Compacted soil is the primary contributor. Other factors include heavy spring nitrogen fertilization, infrequent mowing, heavy use of pesticides, and vigorous growing grass varieties.



## For Additional Information

### Extension Websites

University of Minnesota Extension garden information is available at

[www.extension.umn.edu/gardeninfo](http://www.extension.umn.edu/gardeninfo)

For Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners in Washington County go to

<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/mgweb/washington>

Ask a Master Gardener online at

[www.extension.org/horticulture](http://www.extension.org/horticulture)

### University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum Yard & Garden desk

**952-443-1426**

Call this number to discuss routine yard care and garden questions with a Master Gardener volunteer. If a Master Gardener is not available leave a detailed message explaining the problem or question. A Master Gardener will call you back with a response.

### General Information

**763-767-3578**

The University of Minnesota Master Gardener Program in Washington County is not supported by Washington County.

### Diagnostic Clinic

Ramsey County Extension  
2020 White Bear Avenue  
Maplewood, MN 55109

Master Gardeners can help identify plants and insects and diagnose common plant disease and insect problems.

#### **Diagnostic Clinic Hours:**

From early May to May 31:

Tuesday 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 – 12:00 noon

From June 1 to August 31:

Tuesday 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Thursday 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 – 12:00 noon

From September 1 to early October:

Tuesday 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Saturday 10:00 – 12:00 noon

Closed holiday weekends and the Saturday nearest July 4<sup>th</sup>

For current clinic dates and hours visit  
[www.co.ramsey.mn.us/mastergardener](http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/mastergardener)

Click on “Projects”,  
Then “Diagnostic Clinic”

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