

# CULTURAL PRACTICES FOR A HEALTHY LAWN

## MOWING

### **General Rules**

- Start mowing early in the season
- Mow grass at a minimum of 2 ¾" to 3" early in the spring, then graduate up to 4" in mid to late spring then even higher in hot summer months.
- Set mower higher when the ground is soft
- Mow grass higher in summer months
- **Do Not** bag grass clippings, they add nutrients back to the soil, clippings Don't add to thatch layer!
- Mow lawn at least once or more per week.
- Never cut away more than ⅓ of the grass leaf blade
- Sharpen mower blades regularly (minimum every 10 cuts). If possible mow your lawn 2 times per week. This will give your turf the best appearance.
- Trimming with weedwacker should be at same level as mowing height

### **Benefits of mowing at higher height**

- Greener appearance, by leaving more of the leaf blade intact
- More even appearance, less scalping when ground is uneven
- Helps keep soil cooler
- Helps to shade out weeds and crabgrass
- Takes longer to dry out & promotes less watering
- Less clumping of grass clippings
- Less stress on lawn mower and operator

## WATERING

### **General Guidelines**

Many people wait too long before they start watering their lawn. You need to start early in the season well before the hot summer begins to ensure that your lawn gets thru the summer. There is no one prescription for watering your lawn because of many factors, such as soil type, grass type, temperature, water pressure, type of sprinkler, and fertility levels. Watering your lawn should be looked at as a long-term cultural practice rather than a reactive type measure. In other words, don't wait for a heat wave and then start watering. Permanent damage can occur if you wait too long to water.

### **Plan Ahead**

In general I like to start in April so that I'm prepared for later in the season. Start by just having your hoses, connections, and sprinklers ready and test them to make sure they are operating correctly. If you have an irrigation system, arrange to have it started early in the spring. I like to water periodically in the early spring just to have a watering strategy in place and to correct any problems with sprinkler components. If you wait until later in the season, your irrigation service company will be busy and you will be waiting for them possibly for weeks while your lawn is under stress.

As the season progresses the amount of watering should increase as it gets warmer and dryer. Your lawn watering will peak in the hot summer months when temperatures reach 85+ degrees.

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## ***Helpful Tips***

- Irrigate until water puddles slightly on the soil but does not run-off
- Let water overlap onto pavement slightly
- Try watering during early morning hours (12-5am)
- Get hoses and sprinklers ready in early spring
- Have your irrigation system started in early spring
- Test your watering in spring to make sure you are prepared
- Sandy soils need longer watering times
- Clay soils do not absorb water rapidly, so you may need to do 2 light watering at one time instead of 1 long watering.
- General rule of 1" of water per week
- When seeding, keep soil moist until grass becomes more mature, and then use normal watering procedures.

## **DE-THATCHING**

- Lawns benefit from a small layer of thatch.
- A healthy lawn that is treated properly should maintain good thatch layer.
- If de-thatching is truly needed, it should be done in late summer.
- Never de-thatch or heavy raking in the spring!!

## ***Aeration***

- Aeration is best performed in late summer and seeding generally applied at the same time.
- Aeration, when done annually, offers many benefits to the turf and soil organisms.

## **SEEDING**

- Only use turf grass cultivars that are developed for our area.
- Use tall Fescue varieties
- If you do your own seeding, I do not recommend using seed from home improvement stores.
- Late summer seeding is best!
- Please let me know that you did any seeding so that I can plan to treat your lawn properly.
- I will make recommendations for seeding in the summer.
- Even undamaged lawns can benefit from light over seeding every season by adding the latest seed cultivars to your lawn.
- If aeration is not in your budget, your lawn can still benefit from over seeding when done properly and with proper timing.

## **LEAF REMOVAL**

### ***Late Season Clean-up***

- Remove leaves from turf area with every mowing (weekly) in the fall.
- Do not let leaves build-up on turf with only 1 clean-up in the fall.

### ***Early Season Clean-up***

- Do your clean-up preferably in late February. By cleaning up while the turf is dormant, it will allow the grass to go undisturbed when spring green up is occurring.
- Lawn treatments are not diminished when leaves are on the lawn. The material used is designed to penetrate debris.