



DIY Lawn Care

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Are you struggling to have a good lawn or hiring a lawn service to do it? This fact sheet will help you attain a better lawn and save money by Doing It Yourself.

Lawn Care Calendar

- **April** – Clean lawn of debris and hand rake areas of matted turf.
- **May** – Mow at 2 inches or more. Power rake or aerate, if necessary¹. Overseed any spots missed last fall². Never remove more than 1/3 of the plant when mowing, Apply fertilizer³. Apply preemergence herbicide at the proper time⁴. Apply season-long grub control or hire a lawn care professional, if needed⁵.
- **June** – Mow at 2 ½ inches or higher. Water as needed⁶.
- **July** – Mow at 2 ½ inches or higher. Do not fertilize⁷. Water as needed.
- **August** – Monitor for grubs⁸. Overseed thin spots during the last half of August. Do not fertilize. Water as needed.
- **September** – Mow at 2 inches high. Apply fertilizer⁹. Aerate, if necessary.
- **October** - Apply perennial broadleaf weed herbicide after first light frost¹⁰.
- **November** – Remove leaves, if heavy. Mow and mulch leaves if light. Prepare lawnmower for winter storage¹¹. Choose proper ice melt¹².



More detail

1. If there is ½ inch, or more, of thatch, power raking or aerating may be needed. Thatch is a layer of decomposed grass clippings and partially decomposed organic matter located between the soil and the green growing vegetation. Reduced worm and micro-organism activity, compacted soil, excessive fertilizer or irrigation, infrequent mowing and some vigorous growing grass varieties could be the reason for thatch build-up.



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2. Cool season grasses such as Kentucky Bluegrass, Chewings Fescue, Creeping Red Fescue and turf-type tall fescues, or any combination of these, are good choices for cool season lawn grass in South Dakota.
Select seed with a high percentage of PLS (pure live seed), high germination and low weed seed.
3. Lawn grasses require nitrogen to produce thick green grass. Choose a lawn fertilizer with a NPK ratio of approximately 28-0-0 (28% nitrogen, 0% phosphorus and 0% potassium) for spring and fall fertilizing and follow product directions. Or, wait and apply a spring combination fertilizer/crabgrass prevention at the proper time. Always follow product label instructions.
4. For best crabgrass and other weed pre-emergence control, apply a combination fertilizer/crabgrass preventer when lilac bushes are budded and ready to bloom (55 degrees sustained soil temperature). Always follow product label instructions.
5. If there has been a history of grub damage in the lawn, a pro-active approach may be warranted. Application of a season-long grub control may be worth the time and expense. Always follow product label instructions.
6. Lawns require an inch of water per week, allowing for rain. Water deep and allow to dry before watering again. Avoid late afternoon watering as wet leaf surface into the cooler evening may encourage turf diseases. If you choose a low maintenance lawn, allow the turf to go dormant. See references on drought maintenance.
7. Fertilizing a lawn during the heat of the summer, when the cool-season turfgrass is dormant, will only benefit warm-season, heat-loving weeds.
8. If a season-long grub control product was not applied, monitor for grub damage during August/September. Irregular dead and dying patches in the lawn are a sign of grub feeding. Dig at the edge of the dying patches and if white, C-shaped grubs are present, initiate a rescue grub treatment, following product label instructions.
9. Refer to #3 for turfgrass fertilizer instructions. Follow product label instructions.
10. Late fall (after one or two light frost snaps) is the ideal time to control dandelions and other difficult to control perennial broadleaved lawn weeds. At this time, these weeds are manufacturing food and storing it in the root to carry the plant through the winter. A broadleaf herbicide applied now is readily absorbed and translocated, along with the food and kills root and all. Always follow product label instructions.
11. Prepare the lawnmower and other lawn equipment for winter storage. Drain fuel and run to dry or add a fuel conditioner to the fuel.
12. Ice melts can kill turfgrass due to the high sodium and chloride content. Consider using sand or deicing agents other than sodium chloride.





References:

Spring Lawn Care

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/spring-lawn-care>

Summer Lawn Care: Mowing, Weed Control and Watering Practices

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/summer-lawn-care-mowing-weed-control-and-watering-practices>

Late Season Lawn Care in South Dakota

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/late-season-lawn-care-south-dakota>

Lawn Care During a Drought

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/lawn-care-during-drought>

Do You Have Grubs in Your Lawn?

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/do-you-have-grubs-your-lawn>

Dealing with Drought Stressed Lawns

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/dealing-drought-stressed-lawns>

Considerations for Weed Control in Lawns

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/considerations-weed-control-lawns>

Is Crabgrass Taking Over Your Lawn?

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/crabgrass-taking-over-your-lawn>

Fall Lawn Weed Control

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/fall-lawn-weed-control>

Renew Your Lawn This Fall With Overseeding

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/renew-your-lawn-fall-overseeding>

Fall Weed Control in Lawns

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/fall-weed-control-lawns>

What are the Little Moths All Over My Lawn?

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/what-are-little-moths-all-over-my-lawn>

Lawn Weed Control

<http://extension.sdstate.edu/lawn-weed-control>