



# Basic Lawn Maintenance

## ***Before You Begin***

Know your lawn. Determine the size in square feet, most seed and other application rates are based on 1000 square foot ratios, so this number is crucial in obtaining proper coverage. Pay attention to what is already growing. Identify problem weeds, including moss, for preemptive treatment in the early season. Is it shady due to tree foliage or tall buildings?

## ***General Maintenance***

### **Early Spring**

Apply pre-emergent herbicides (for crabgrass, weed control) to past problem areas. Do not apply if seed will be planted in the spring!

Apply grass seed, limestone, fertilizer and other organic matter (including: peat, manure and/or topsoil)

Have soil pH levels tested.

### **Summer**

Keep a regular mowing schedule, though less frequently than in the spring and fall, unless rainfall is excessive.

Allow clippings to decompose and fertilize naturally

### **Fall**

Fertilize again

Apply seed if not done in the spring. Late August-September is the best time to start grass from seed.

Rake leaves and remove lawn surface before winter. The tannic acid released when fall leaves decompose will necessitate greater limestone application in the spring to balance the lawn's pH.

## ***New Lawn Construction***

1. Till or loosen soil 2-4" deep and work in lime, organics, and fertilizers
2. Spread seed with broadcast spreader, back and forth across lawn, and then repeat at right angle. Use rate recommended by equipment and seed distributors, though and average rate is 5lb per 1000 sq feet.
3. Lightly scrape seed into ground with garden rake. Do not cover, just work it in slightly. Mulch with straw on slopes and in drainage areas to prevent erosion while seed is germinating.
4. Keep lawn evenly moist, seed normally appears in 1-3 weeks.
5. Mow after new grass has reached 2" tall, 3" in a chronic problem lawn.

## ***Lawn Repair***

Loosen a few inches of soil, broadcast seed by hand, over seeding is okay in many situations where grass has difficulty taking root.

Drag rake over the top of the seed and fertilizer, working it in slightly

Mulch and water as needed

In patchy areas that remain problems consider and alternative to seeding, such as sod or straw mats with grass seed implanted inside

### ***Purchasing Seed***

Purchasing pre mixed seed is a good choice for a residential lawn due to differing soil quality within one lawn and a desire for easy maintenance. Choose seed types within a mixture based on the type of yard.

Sunny: Kentucky Bluegrass and Red Fescue

Shady: Red Fescue, Kentucky Bluegrass and other tall fescues

Quick Growing: Mix w/ 30% perennial rye

Rye grass is often considered a temporary grass. It germinates quickly but is not hardy. So it aids in preventing erosion and providing grass coverage until the permanent lawn is established. If immediate coverage is not essential, look for mixes with less than 20% rye.

### ***Preparing Soil***

Massachusetts soil is generally fairly rich in organic material, and requires only the occasional additions of peat, compost and lime to keep it balanced. There are a few exceptions to this standard maintenance as discussed above.

### **Recent Construction Sites**

Newly built homes and lawns that have been disrupted by construction activity often have had topsoil stripped away or buried during early excavation. The remaining clays and sandy soils are not usually conducive to a lawn's even growth. Adding greater amounts of topsoil, compost, and peat will help correct the problem soil, but have it tested first.

### **Old Surface Soils**

By the same token, lawns that have not been healthy for some time or have been exposed to heavy traffic (such as children's play areas) often need reworking and replacement nutrients. Peat can help aerate soil, and mechanical aeration every couple of years can help roots send up new shoots as well allow nutrients to reach them

### **Mowing**

Regular mowing is necessary to maintain a healthy lawn. Keep grass mowed to an even length, between 1 1/2" and 3". Mow at regular intervals, once every 7-11 days. Keep mower blade sharp. These steps will keep grass lush and healthy, especially during stressful and hot periods in the middle of the summer. In general, lawns can be mowed more frequently and shorter in the spring and fall. Let it grow taller and slow down the frequency of mowing in the heat of late June through August.

*Courtesy of your friends at*

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