

Spring Lawn Care

Spring in Oklahoma heralds the revival of lawns, making it an opportune time to implement essential maintenance practices to ensure a lush, healthy turf throughout the growing season. Key aspects of spring lawn care include mowing, fertilizing, dethatching, aerating, and watering. These practices play a vital role in promoting vigorous growth and resilience against environmental stresses.

Mowing

Proper mowing is fundamental to lawn health. As temperatures rise and the grass grows actively, initiate mowing to maintain an appropriate height. A mowing height of 1-1.5" is recommended for bermudagrass lawns. Regular mowing at this height encourages dense growth and reduces weed competition. It is crucial to avoid removing more than 1/3 of the grass blade length in a single mowing session to prevent stress on the turf.

Fertilizing

Fertilization replenishes essential nutrients, promoting robust growth and vibrant color. Before applying fertilizers, conduct a soil test to determine nutrient needs and soil pH. In Oklahoma, the initial fertilization for warm-season grasses like bermudagrass should occur in April once the grass has greened up and is actively growing. A balanced fertilizer with a nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (N-P-K) ratio, such as 10-10-10, can be applied at 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. Subsequent applications may be made every 6 to 8 weeks during the growing season, but fertilization should be avoided after September 1 to prevent stimulating lush fall growth that can hinder winter hardiness and spring diseases.

Dethatching

Thatch is a layer of organic matter that accumulates between the soil surface and the grass blades. While a thin layer of thatch can be beneficial, excessive thatch (greater than ½") can impede water infiltration and nutrient absorption and promote disease. For warm-season grasses like Bermudagrass, dethatching should be performed before the grass greens up in the spring. Use a dethatching machine or power rake to remove the excess thatch layer. A thatch rake can be used for small lawns. Regular dethatching enhances root development and improves the effectiveness of fertilizers and water.

Aerating

Soil compaction restricts root growth and reduces water and nutrient uptake. Aeration alleviates compaction by creating small holes in the soil, allowing air, water, and nutrients to penetrate the root zone. The best time to aerate warm-season grasses is during their active growing period in late spring or early summer. Use a core aerator that removes soil plugs approximately 2-3" inches deep and about 4" apart. Aeration is particularly beneficial for lawns subject to heavy foot traffic or those established on clay soils.

Watering

Proper watering practices are crucial for lawn health. The turf should be watered when needed and not on a regular schedule. The amount of water your turfgrass needs is influenced by soil texture and weather changes. During the summer, enough water should be applied to wet the soil to a 6" depth (approximately 1-2" per week). If water begins to puddle or run off, turn the system off and allow water to soak into the soil. Repeat this cycle until the proper amount of water is applied.

Weed Control

Spring is also the time to manage weeds that compete with turfgrass for nutrients and space. Applying pre-emergent herbicides from January to mid-

March can prevent the germination of summer annual weeds like crabgrass. Post-emergent herbicides can be effective for broadleaf weeds that have already emerged. Always follow label instructions and consider spot-treating to minimize chemical use.

Conclusion

Implementing these spring lawn care practices sets the foundation for Oklahoma's healthy and resilient lawns. Regular mowing at the appropriate height encourages dense growth, while proper fertilization replenishes essential nutrients. Dethatching and aerating improve soil conditions, promoting robust root systems. Efficient watering practices ensure the lawn receives adequate moisture without waste. By adhering to these guidelines, homeowners can enjoy a lush, green lawn that enhances the beauty and value of their property throughout the growing season.

References

<https://extension.okstate.edu/topics/plants-and-animals/gardening-and-lawn-care/>

<https://extension.okstate.edu/topics/plants-and-animals/gardening-and-lawn-care/lawns-and-turfgrass/>