

## HIRING A LAWN CARE PROVIDER?

### Questions for Green Thumbs (to avoid green water!)

1. Do you 'feed the soil instead of the plants?' Explain which of your practices contributes to healthy soil.
2. Do you have a pesticide-free lawn care program?
3. Do you offer spot treatment applications for specifically identified pests or weeds?
4. Are your products non-toxic?
5. What method of weed control will you use?
6. What types of fertilizers do you use?
7. What is your typical fertilizer application schedule?
8. Will you adjust the cutting schedule to the growth rates of the lawn as it changes over the season?
9. Do you use mulching blades on your equipment and leave clippings on site?

## 4R'S OF FERTILIZATION



Keeping our streams, lakes, and groundwater clean is important to all of us. You may not think the fertilizer spread on your lawn and garden is a source of pollution. However, we are all part of a larger watershed community and the cumulative effect of our lawn care chemicals have resulted in large scale water pollution problems. Whether you manage your own lawn and landscape or hire a professional, the following information will help you make environmentally-sound choices.

*"We can have it all..  
healthy 'green' lawns  
and blue lakes!"*

No matter where we live, the quality of our water affects the quality of our lives. We can have it all....healthy 'green' lawns and blue lakes! By following the 4Rs, we have the ability and responsibility to improve our soil and water resources for generations to come.

**Follow these effective lawn care  
tips today 4R tomorrow**

**Right TYPE:** Have your soil tested to determine fertilizer needs and choose a slow-release fertilizer that is free of phosphorous.

**Right RATE:** Soil test results will supply you with the appropriate fertilizer rate. Do not exceed the recommended rate and never apply more than 1.5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

**Right TIME:** Autumn is the best time to fertilize lawns when cool season grasses are actively growing.

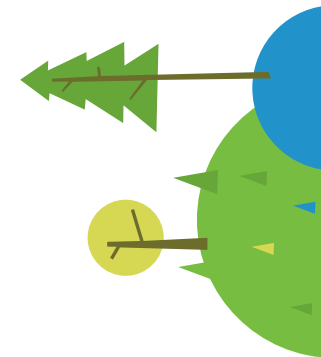
**Right PLACE:** Proper fertilization techniques save money and protect waterways and wildlife. Avoid fertilizing near streams, ditches, hard surfaces, and slopes.

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**KEEP YOUR  
YARD GREEN  
& OUR WATERS  
CLEAN**

cuyahoga  
**SOIL & WATER**  
conservation district



# HEALTHY LAWN CARE CALENDAR FOR HOMEOWNERS

A MONTH-BY-MONTH REFERENCE GUIDE TO KEEP YOUR YARD GREEN AND OUR WATERS CLEAN

## JANUARY - New Year, New Lawn Attitude

- Consider dormant seeding your lawn. This seeding method is quite successful as the freeze and thaw cycles of winter pull seeds into the soil, increasing spring germination.
- Be a responsible dog owner and scoop the poop. Pet waste pathogens, like e-coli, end up in rivers and streams even during a January thaw.



## FEBRUARY - Fall In Love With Your Lawn

- Start planning for Spring by visiting home and garden shows, great places to look into new products and new ideas.
- Consider reducing the size of your lawn. Start planning to add a rain garden/vegetable garden, or a wild flower meadow.

## MARCH - Mowing March Madness

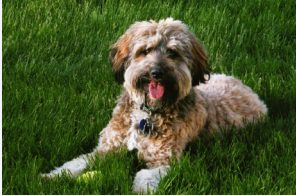
- Get your lawn mower ready for the busy season ahead by sharpening the blades.
- Every 3 years, soil test in Spring (or late Fall) to determine what nutrients need to be added to the soil. Testing saves money, time and prevents over application of fertilizers and nutrients.
- Lightly rake the lawn to remove compacted grass and snow mold caused by excess moisture.
- Start a compost pile with the first grass clippings of the season. Subsequent clippings should be left on the lawn as nature's fertilizer.

## APRIL - Hop To It, Get Outside

- If soil test results indicate the need, amend your soil. Organic products are best.
- Tolerate some weeds in your yard; they are not the enemy. Plant biodiversity in your lawn provides food for pollinators and beneficial soil organisms. If you must remove weeds try these non-synthetic chemical approaches:
  - Apply corn gluten meal to prevent annual weed seeds from germinating.
  - Spot treat existing weeds with an organic weed control product that contains molasses or liquid iron.
  - Hand-pull weeds. Purchase a tool to help, like a Speedy Weedy, or encourage your children to pull.

## MAY - Mother Earth, Treat Mom Right

- Mow high at 3 or 4 inches and let clippings lie on the lawn. Save money, time, and prevent over application of nutrients by letting the grass clippings add nitrogen to the soil.
- Continue to hand pull or spot treat weeds with an organic weed control spray.
- Reduce or eliminate pesticides to protect children and animals.



## JUNE - Give Dad A Break

- Brown-yellow dormant grass is normal during summer's heat. If you require a green lawn during this time, water deeply, 1 inch of water 2 times a week.
- Relieve lawn stress by applying gentle, slow fertilizers like compost, compost tea or sea kelp. Synthetic, chemical, high-nutrient fertilizers increase stress on lawns.
- Read the weeds for a healthy lawn. Every weed tells a story and gives clues about lawn conditions.

## JULY - Independence From Chemicals

- Learn to identify good and bad bugs. Many beneficial insects visit yards and should be left alone. Beneficial bugs feed on common pests. Find a strategy to foster healthy, balanced garden ecology.
- Control pests with natural oils like neem and garlic. Only use neem oil when necessary, it is a natural broad spectrum insecticide that kills beneficial insects too.



## AUGUST - Dog Days of Summer

- Over seed the lawn; slice seeding is the most effective way to seed a lawn.
- When choosing grass seed consider turf type tall fescue, best suited for Ohio's climate.
- Mow only when needed.

## SEPTEMBER - Don't Labor Over The Lawn

- Aerate to introduce oxygen and reduce the incidence of thatch in the lawn. Both mechanical (core) and biological (liquid) methods are effective.
- Lawn seeding can be done now until the end of the October. Be sure seed is in direct contact with the soil for best germination.
- If you aren't seeding your lawn this Fall, apply corn gluten meal to thwart Fall weed seeds.
- Continue to mow high at 3 or 4 inches.
- Monitor for grubs and animal activity; skunks dig to find grubs.

## OCTOBER - Mulching The Leaves Isn't A Trick - It's a Treat For Your Lawn

- Mulch leaves with a lawn mower. Leaves provide nutrients for healthy soil, more of nature's fertilizer.
- Apply a good quality compost along with grass seed while seeding the lawn.

## NOVEMBER - Be Thankful For A Healthy Lawn

- Fall is the best time to feed the lawn. Amend the soil according to the soil test results.
- Every 3 years, soil test in the late Fall (or Spring) to determine what nutrients need to be added to the soil. Testing can save money, time and prevent over application of nutrients.
- Continue mulching leaves. Cut leaves smaller by mowing more than once with your mower, or add leaves to your compost pile.



## DECEMBER - Give Your Lawn The Gift Of Good Health

- Research environmentally friendly ice melt products.
- Drain gas from lawn mower for winter storage.

Information brought to you by the Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District.  
Conserving land and aquatic resources in a developed environment through  
stewardship, education, and technical assistance.

For further information on these monthly tips visit [www.cuyahogaswcd.org](http://www.cuyahogaswcd.org)