

Tips for Home Gardeners

Provided by: **Terrence S. Marshall**, County Agent, East Baton Rouge Parish

Turfgrass

Lawngrasses are now showing spring regrowth. Be careful not to push the season by forcing early growth with fertilizer. If put on too early, it will feed the winter weeds. If put on too heavily, it will create a lush, weak growth sensitive to brown patch, dollar spot or late freezes. Let the grass awaken slowly and show definite growth. Mow once or twice before fertilizing on late March. If you wish to dethatch, core aerify and sand topdress, or power rake this year, wait until when the turf is actively growing. Large dead areas are probably die-outs from winter kill or fall brown patch disease. Treat the actively diseased areas that are yellowing with either chlorothalonil or PCNB or Bayleton fungicides.



General Home Lawn Weed Control

Herbicides can control weeds in your turf. Chemicals that are useful now are 2,4-D blends, Image, Simazine, Atrazine and Basagran. Be sure to follow label rates and warnings. Your county agent and Louisiana Master Gardener Volunteer can advise you. Apply herbicides either before or well after first green-up, but not during turfgrass transition.

Broadleaf weeds can often be controlled by using selective postemergence formulations which contain two or more herbicides. Formulations of 2,4-D or blends with 2,4-D are available for most southern grasses. Examples of 2,4-D blends are Green Light Wipe Out, Kmart Broadleaf Weed Killer for southern grasses, Spectrum 33 Plus, Trimec, Fertilome Weed Out and Weed B Gon (Southern Lawn II). Most labels will stress use on younger weeds growing in the cooler mid-to-late spring. A temporary discoloration of the lawn may occur. A second application two or three weeks later is usually needed on pesky species (sometimes a third). Wet foliage only. Don't saturate the soil.

READ AND FOLLOW LABEL DIRECTIONS

Most labels will stress use on younger weeds growing in the milder mid-spring to early summer. A temporary discoloration of the lawn usually occurs. Repeat application in two weeks. Warning: These products contain phenoxy (2,4-D) herbicides. Avoid drift, keep away from gardens and clean sprayers thoroughly with ammonia.

For bermuda or zoysia lawns, weed killers with MSMA or DSMA often provide selective control for most grassy and some broadleaf weeds. Use these arsenicals in June through August. Preemergence herbicides can be applied to thin lawns to protect them from weeds until they thicken and cover. They are not for newly seeded areas.

Fertilize in April

During April or May, all warm-season grasses should be in full swing. Start feeding your lawn if you have not done so. Turf fertilizers with high first number, low second number and medium last number are preferred. Start with a complete fertilizer like 8-8-8 if you know your soil phosphorus is not too high. If you have bermudagrass, use 12 to 13 pounds per 1,000 square feet. On zoysia or St. Augustine, use 8 to 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet. On centipede or carpetgrasses, use 6 to 7 pounds per 1,000 square feet. After this, use just a nitrogen fertilizer at a rate of ½ to 1 pound of pure nitrogen per 1,000 feet each month until August.

Sharpen the mower blade before the season and at mid-season. Check for fresh oil and stale gasoline before you start mowing.

Choose Correct Mower Settings

Cutting heights are important for healthy grass. Choose the higher cut for grass in shade. Cut grass down to these heights:

Common Bermuda	1 ½ inches
Hybrid Bermuda	¾ - 1
Zoysia	1 - 1 ½
Centipede/carpet	1 ½ - 2
St. Augustine	2 ½ - 3

HOW MUCH WATER IS ENOUGH?

Water long enough to soak the ground several inches. If you have a good bit of thatch, you'll have to water more frequently. Areas under trees normally need more water than other areas because of tree roots. Centipede and carpet grasses seem to need the most moisture of all the turfgrasses.

Trees hinder growth from shading and also from drought. Areas near trees need special watering to keep grass actively growing.