

BEST PRACTICES



5 Spring Tips for Healthy Lawns

Spring is finally here! Our lawns are waking up and, so too, are weeds. Weeds and moss often outcompete the grass in our lawns because they can survive in soil conditions that are stressful for our lawns. To create conditions that create healthy grass, follow these tips:

1. Test Your Soil

A basic soil test will help you determine the amount of lime, nitrogen, potassium and micro-nutrients your lawn needs. It can also help you know how much water is appropriate for your landscape.

Tip: Thurston Conservation District provides soil testing for a nominal fee. For more information, call 360-754-3588 or go to www.thurstoncd.com/working-lands/soil-testing

2. Aerate Your Lawn

Many weeds thrive in compacted soil and will outcompete grass under these conditions. Aerating your lawn removes small “plugs” of soil, which improves root development of grass by allowing air and water to soak into the soil.

Tip: You can hire a lawn care service to aerate for you or rent an aerator. To save money, you could share the rental of an aerator with your neighbors!

3. Overseed and Top Dress with Compost

Overseeding your lawn will help grass take root in bare and thinning areas instead of opportunistic weeds! If you are going to aerate, apply seed afterward using a perennial rye/fine fescue grass seed mix that is designed for growing conditions in the Pacific Northwest. Then, lightly rake in ¼ inch to ½ inch of fine compost. The compost will cover the seed and add nutrients and micro-organisms to the soil that will help your lawn thrive!

4. Add Lime

Pacific Northwest soils tend to be acidic (low pH). Moss flourishes in acidic soils. Washington State University recommends a soil pH of 5.5 to 6.5 for lawns. If your soil pH is less than 6.5, it will take multiple applications of lime over time to help increase the pH.

Tip: Apply up to 35 lbs/1,000 sq. ft. of pelletized dolomite lime up to four times per year to help increase your soil pH over time.



NOTE: Our local soils are naturally high in phosphorus, so it rarely needs to be added.

Due to its adverse effects on aquatic environments, phosphorus is now banned from fertilizers in our area.

There may still be some on store shelves or in your garage. Its use is not recommended unless you are establishing a brand new lawn. Please dispose of any unused fertilizer at HazoHouse. (See pg. 4 for location info.).

5. Use a Slow-Release Fertilizer

When applying fertilizer, use a slow-release natural organic fertilizer. Slow-release fertilizers rely on soil organisms and other processes to “release” nutrients at a rate at which plants can use them, making it less likely that the nutrients will wash away and be wasted.

Use a calibrated fertilizer spreader, and follow package instructions carefully. More is not better!

Tip: For best results, wait about two weeks after you apply lime before you fertilize.

Source: Stream Team News, Spring 2016



3 Reasons to Stay away from Fertilizers that Include Insect, Disease or Weed “Control”

- Spreads harmful chemicals throughout your lawn (even where it is not needed).
- Often contain herbicides or pesticides that target species which are not even present in the Pacific Northwest.
- Kills the beneficial micro-organisms in your soil that help your grass to grow green and healthy!

For more information, go to the Grow Smart Grow Safe website at www.growsmartgrowsafe.org