

Tall Fescue

Management Plan

Established Tall Fescue Lawn Recommendations

Fertilizing the Lawn

- Fertilize 2 to 3 times a year: Memorial Day, 4th of July, and Halloween for a winterizer.
- Use a complete turf-grade fertilizer with an analysis of 20-20-10-3F. Make sure to sweep or blow all fertilizer off your sidewalks and other rock areas as the iron in the fertilizer will permanently stain cement and rock. Make sure to water-in the fertilizer thoroughly.

Aerating the Lawn

- Lawn aeration should be done at least once a year for a healthy lawn.
- Aeration should be done in April or September. This reduces compaction and thatch build-up, thus allowing proper water movement into the soil and reducing insects and diseases.
- Aeration aids in smoothing out the lawn and improving the overall appearance.
- Plugs should be pulled from the soil in 2-inch spacings and should have at least 1 inch of soil on the plug. Most lawn aerators and lawn aerating companies have 4-inch spacing. Thus, the lawn should be gone over twice.
- Plugs should be removed on clay-based soil.
- Plugs do not necessarily have to be removed on sand-based soil.
- The lawn may appear undesirable for a week or two, but it will recover. This is also the time to add compost top-dressing and, if needed, over-seeding mixes.

Thatching

- Do not de-thatch or power rake your lawn. This causes more injury than what it is worth. It is better to aerate than to de-thatch.

Mowing

- Remember to never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade at one time nor remove more than 3/4 inch of grass at any single time.
- Use sharp blades and mow in the cool of the day to reduce plant stress.
- Mowing height for cool-season Tall Fescue is 2-3 inches.

Top Dressing With Compost

- Top-dressing with compost is used to modify soils and level the surface. Spreading 1/4 to 1/2 inch of compost or rich soil on the lawn renews soil without digging it up.
- Top-dressing is most effective after core aeration opens up the soil.
- Use a high-quality dairy or cattle compost that is aged more than 6 months to avoid spreading weeds or diseases. Spread compost with a shovel or small spreader and then rake it in lightly.
- It may not be necessary to apply top-dressing on the lawn, provided the soil was properly amended at the time of establishment.

Weed Control

- The use of pre-emergent herbicides for prevention of annual grassy weed problems is a recommended spring lawn care practice.
 - Pre-emergent herbicides should not be used on those lawns being over-seeded in the spring.
 - Any pre-emergent herbicide must be watered-in with at least 1/2 inch of water as soon as possible after application; the herbicide may not work effectively if not watered in.
- Where a pre-emergent herbicide is not used there are excellent post-emergent herbicide products for the control of young annual grassy weeds.
- Control of annual and perennial broadleaf weeds can be done in the spring.

Watering

- See Irrigation Guide for established turfgrass lawn
- See Watering Guide for new turfgrass lawn

