

LAWNS AND THEIR CARE

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This is a big subject that can take a long time to discuss, but I'll try to condense it to fit in here. But there may be more questions at the end, so I'll give resources to help find the answers.

Lawns start with plant selection. Some folks prefer the fescue type grasses, others like the bermudagrass/zoysia types. And they are as different as day is to dark. Understanding them will help in selection and caring for them.

The fescues are cool-season varieties, meaning that they grow really well in late winter, spring, early summer, fall and early winter. They don't prefer the heat of summer necessarily and tend to be somewhat dormant then. But they are the most favored by most homeowners in this area.

On the other hand, the bermudagrass/zoysia grasses love hot weather, and then don't do well in the cool weather. These warm season kinds green up when it starts getting hot, turn dormant in the fall, and remain brown or so the rest of the year. It would seem that the simple thing to do is to blend them, but the warm season grasses grow vigorously and usually overtake the cool season kinds, making it hard for them to thrive.

With this in mind, choices have to be made, and that then affects planting times. Even though folks try to seed the cool season grasses in the spring, even up to summer, the best time for seeding the fescues is in the fall. This give the grasses time to germinate and grow during the cool temperatures and establish a strong root system before summer gets here. Spring seeding will allow them to germinate, but the root systems will not have enough time get established in time to withstand the stress of heat and dry weather.

The next big factor is soil fertility. Most lawns are not sampled nor fertilized. But there are some folks who want a green vigorous lawn, and they are willing to mow it and manicure it. Checking the soil fertility profile can be a big step in helping to get and maintain a strong stand of grass. The sampling process will tell you the soil pH (a measure of acidity), the available phosphorous and potassium, and the recommendations for any lime to adjust the pH, and the correct amount of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium for the particular grass you chose for the lawn. The UT Lab in Nashville can provide this information, and we have the sampling kits at the Extension office.

Weed control is important for that perfect lawn. The main culprits are the broadleaf weeds, such as dandelion, plantains, and the like. There are some differences in these weeds metabolically and it takes different products to eliminate them. There are some products to be applied before the weeds come up, called pre-emergents, and there are products to be applied after the weeds come up, called post-emergents. Which ever way you choose, the key is to identify the weed targets and apply the correct product. Not doing so is a waste of time and money. There is a product that has been effective against several weeds. Tri-Mec is a combination of three compatible products that comes premixed and had been around a long time.

Once the grass is chosen and sown or sodded, the fertilizer is applied and the weeds are tackled, the important thing is mowing at the correct height. Some folks mow it very close, and then wonder where the grass went. Mowing too short eliminates leaf area, so necessary for the plant to support the photosynthesis process which helps feed the plant. Mowing short will cause the plant to draw on reserves stored in the root system, and the result will be a weak root system, a weak plant, a thin stand, and a stand unable to compete against the weeds that will come up.

Mowing at the 3-5 inch length for the fescues is the most important choice to make when clipping the grass. Many professionals prefer to stay at the upper end of that range. The warm-season grasses may be mown shorter, because they can withstand it better than the fescues and the physiology

of the plant. The more leaf area left, the quicker the plant will rebound from the mowing stress and the stronger the plant will remain.

Clippings can be left for adding back organic matter to the lawn. Some folks like to aerate the lawns. Reseeding over the top with an aerator afterward can help rejuvenate a stand of fescue every 2-4 years, depending on the quality of the stand.

This is a quick look at lawn care, and there are many resources available to add information for the lawn owner. The UT Publication library can be found online, and searching for Residential and Consumer Horticulture will guide you to these publications on fertilization, grass selection, weed control and other management tips. As always, you can contact the UT/TSU Bedford County Extension office at 684-5971 and we'll help you find the information you need.





6 bags 9 bags 9 bags
12 bags 12 bags

**Mix equal part garden soil with topsoil or native soil, mixing at a 3 inch rate.
NOTE: Sta-Green® Flower & Vegetable Garden Soil Plus Fertilizer is not recommended for container gardens or houseplants.
Use Sta-Green® Potting Mixes for all container gardening needs.
We recommend wearing gloves when using this product and all other gardening soils and fertilizers. It is important to use clean containers and tools when planting seeds and cuttings. Rinse containers and tools thoroughly if cleaning agents have been used.*

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS

Total Nitrogen (N)*	0.05%
0.02% Ammoniacal Nitrogen	
0.02% Nitrate Nitrogen	
0.01% Urea Nitrogen	
Available Phosphate (P2O5)*	0.04%
Soluble Potash (K2O)*	0.03%

Derived from: Polymer-coated Homogeneous; Ammonium Phosphate, Potassium Sulfate and Potassium Nitrate; and Polymer-coated Urea, Monoammonium Phosphate and Sulfate of Potash.
*** Part of the fertilizer materials have been polymer-coated to provide the following slow-release nutrients: 0.04% Nitrogen (N), 0.01% Available Phosphate (P2O5) and 0.02% Soluble Potash (K2O)**

This product is a low analysis fertilizer. Not recommended for use as a fertilizer product.

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In the state of Washington, this product meets the guidelines for metals adopted by the Association of Fertilizer and Food Control Officials. Information regarding the contents of this product is available on our website at <http://www.aafco.org/metals>.