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Released: March 13, 2025

Lawn calendar for cool-season grasses

K-State horticulture expert suggests maintenance regime for cool-season grasses

K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — As lawns begin to turn green, controlling weeds and applying fertilizer is important.

Cool-season grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue are among the most common cool-season grasses needing attention, said Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini, who shares the following maintenance calendar:

March

Spot treat broadleaf weeds, if necessary. Treat on a day that is 50 degrees or warmer. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours of application will reduce effectiveness.

April

Apply crabgrass preventer when redbud trees are in full bloom, usually in April. The preventer needs to be watered in before it will start to work. One-quarter inch of water will be enough to water in any of the products commonly available. Remember that a healthy, thick lawn is the best weed prevention.

May

Fertilize the lawn with a slow-release fertilizer if you water your lawn or if you normally receive enough rainfall that your turf doesn't go drought-dormant during the summer.

If there are broadleaf weeds, spot treat or use a fertilizer that includes a weed killer. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours of application will reduce effectiveness of the weed killer, but the fertilizer needs to be watered in. If you are using a product that has both fertilizer and weed killer, wait 24 hours after application before watering in.

If grubs have been a problem in the past, apply a product containing imidacloprid or chlorantraniliprole during May or anytime from May through June for imidacloprid. These products work to prevent grub damage. If rainfall does not occur within 24 hours, irrigate with ¼ inch of water.

June through Mid-July

Apply second round of crabgrass preventer by June 15 – unless you have used Dimension (dithiopyr) or Barricade (prodiamine) for the April application. These two products normally provide season-long control with a single application. Remember to water it in.

Late-July through August

If you see grub damage, apply a grub killer that contains Dylox. Imidacloprid and chlorantraniliprole are effective against young grubs but may not be effective on late instar grubs. The grub killer containing Dylox must be watered in within 24 hours or effectiveness decreases.

September

Fertilize around Labor Day. Water in the fertilizer if rainfall does not occur.

November

Fertilize. This fertilizer is taken up by the roots but is not used until the following spring. Water in fertilizer.

Spray for broadleaf weeds even if they are small. Broadleaf weeds are much easier to control in the fall than in the spring. Try to spray on a day that is at least 50 degrees. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours reduces effectiveness. Use label rates for all products.

Domenghini reminds homeowners that using best practices for turf management is the most effective way to manage their lawn.

“This includes watering only when needed and only applying as much as needed. Deep, infrequent watering is more efficient than frequent, shallow watering,” Domenghini said. “Excessive fertilizer does not equal a healthier lawn; Follow recommendations for lawn height when mowing.”

She also recommends getting the soil tested to determine nutrient levels. The best start to a healthy lawn is healthy soil.

“Wait to apply fertilizers until you know what your turfgrass needs. This step can save homeowners time and money,” Domenghini said.

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a [weekly Horticulture Newsletter](#) with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens.

Interested persons can subscribe to the newsletter, as well as send their garden and yard-related questions to hortsupport@ksu.edu, or contact your [local K-State Research and Extension office](#).

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