

Are you Tired of Your Lawn Treating you like Dirt?

Working as a horticulture agent has given me the opportunity to answer many lawn and landscaping questions. I am frequently told the following; I have done everything that I know to do to get the grass looking luscious, green, and healthy, but still no luck. I have spent a lot of time, effort, and money trying to make the lawn the most attractive in the neighborhood, but it is just a perfect failure. I can't believe my neighbor's yard looks better than mine; it's so frustrating. There is an old saying; if the grass is not green then give it fertilizer and water. Sadly, water and fertilizer do not fix all problems.

There are so many different reasons why a lawn will not do well and so we will explore them.

Right grass at the right place- Each type of grass has different requirements; there is grass for shade, others for partial shade and some for full sun. Know your grass and make sure it is at the right place. A grass that is not at the right place will not survive even if it gets all the care in the world.

Soil pH and nutrients availability- Having the right soil pH is very important; the plant will not survive if the pH is not right for the plant. Doing a soil test will tell you the pH and the available nutrients in the soil. Remember health soil, healthy plant!

Irrigation- Watering the lawn is good but too much of a good thing is bad. Only irrigate twice per week with ½-¾" of water per application. Irrigating the plants frequently will encourage shallow roots which cannot handle stress during drought or low temperature. Remember to apply at least ¼ "of water after a fertilizer application.

Mowing- A lawn that is not mowed at the proper height will not maximize its growth potential. Therefore it is important to know the height requirement of your specific type of grass. Remove only a 1/3 of the height of the grass when mowing and recycle clippings in lawn, it will reduce the need to purchase fertilizer. Leave clippings in the lawn will not increase thatch. If there is a thatch problem then vertical mowing is recommended.

Weeds- Treating the weeds as they emerge will give better control; older weeds are harder to control than younger ones. Weed infested lawn are more likely to experience disease and insect problems.

Insects- Lawns that are infested with insects will not thrive even though you fertilize and irrigate. Check for insects such as chinch bugs, especially in St. Augustine lawns; there is an easy chinch bug test to determine if there is an infestation.

Pesticide applications- Applying pesticides correctly is very important when considering having a healthy lawn. Application rate and temperature are two important factors to consider before applying herbicides. Make sure to read all labels before applying chemicals. Herbicides should not be applied in a temperature over 90 degrees Fahrenheit; this will cause injury to the lawn.

To help diagnose your lawn problems correctly you can take pictures or samples from your lawn to the UF/IFAS Extension Osceola County plant clinic. For more information on lawn care and other related horticulture topics, contact Grantly Ricketts with UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at 321-697-3000 or email gricketts@ufl.edu.