

Simple steps to a Beautiful Lawn

Driving around the neighborhood you will notice that spring has arrived by the evidence of residents working tirelessly in their lawns. I will be soon to be joining those lawn enthusiasts and I hope you will do the same. Aside from giving peace of mind, a beautiful healthy lawn has many benefits such as creating beneficial impact on the environment, preventing erosion, providing recreation area and increasing home value. In addition, who wants their family and friends to be visiting from out of town to be greeted by a weedy and untidy lawn? The following steps will guide you to a healthy lawn:

Put the right grass at the right place: It cannot be over emphasized that having the right grass at the right place is very important; use Bahiagrass in the sun and St. Augustinegrass in partial shade. Homeowners sometimes install the wrong grass and then try to fix the problem by applying excess fertilizer and water to the site, which may lead to pest problems, water pollution and a waste of resources.

Do a soil test: In addition, each plant has a pH requirement (how acidic /alkaline the soil is); getting a simple soil test from the University of Florida/IFAS Extension in Osceola County can give you an indication of the soil pH, soil nutrients deficiency and will provide you fertilizer recommendations.

Proper mowing: Mowing your lawn at the right height will reduce some of the stress that the grass will encounter. St Augustine should be mowed between 3.5 to 4 inches tall while bahia grass should be maintained between 3 to 4 inches. It is also important that you follow the general 1/3 rule of not removing more than 1/3 of the height at each mowing. Removing a large chunk of the grass blade at once will result in scalping which makes the lawn look undesirable. Also, using a sharp mower blade is just as important as mowing height.

Prevent weeds: Weeds are unsightly; they compete with the lawn for nutrients and water, and provide harbor for insects and diseases. Weed population can be reduced when the following recommendations are followed; plant right grass at the right place, and mow grass at the recommended height; grass mowed too low will encourage weed infestation. Other things to consider are to avoid over irrigation, mow weed infested lawn before weeds produce seed head, keep lawn densely populated and control weeds at an early stage, especially, crab grass should be controlled when there are two to three leaf blades. Unfortunately, there is no herbicide on the market that will control crab grass in Bahia lawn.

Fertilize Appropriately: The following advice is worth taking; fertilize based on a soil test; over fertilization leads to an increase in water needs. Do not fertilize wet lawn; Irrigate lawn after fertilization, and avoid applying fertilizer in temperature over 90 degree F, it will burn your lawn. Contrary to popular belief, more fertilizer is not better.

Irrigate effectively: Irrigate twice per week, with a ½ inch of water per session; frequent watering encourages weak, shallow roots.

For more information on lawn and other related horticulture topics, contact Grantly Ricketts with UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at 321-697-3000 or email gricketts@ufl.edu.