

Year Round Gardening

Ready, set, get your lawn ready to grow!

By Fredricka Bogardus, Colorado Master Gardener

Spring lawn care is critical to a healthy summer lawn. There are several things to do before the warm weather comes on. This article applies to cool weather lawns such as blue grass and fescues.

If you have a buffalo grass lawn consult: Buffalo Grass Lawns Garden Note 565-
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/mg/Gardennotes/565.pdf>,

First on your agenda should be core aeration. Aeration addresses the problem of soil compaction. You can rent an aerator or hire a lawn service. Make sure you thoroughly water the lawn the day before aeration. You will end up with plugs on the lawn. Leave them in place they will decompose rapidly.

Once the lawn is aerated there are two other early season tasks to think about, but you only get to choose one. Early April is the time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide. This will help to control annual weeds such as crab grass. It may also help in control re-seeding of perennial weeds, like dandelions.



The other task you can choose is reseeding thin or bare spots. This is an either or with the application of pre-emergent herbicides. If you apply a pre-emergent product, the seed will not grow successfully. Pre-emergent herbicides form a barrier. Once the product is down do not disturb the soil. Wait about 6 weeks to seed after application of pre-emergent herbicides to reseed.

If you decide to reseed make sure your soil temperature is between 50 and 65°F, to check use an inexpensive meat thermometer or similar device. Select a good quality seed, check with your local garden center for suggestions. Prepare the lawn by raking

up well then drop the seed evenly. If you are filling in large bare spots you may want to mulch the seed very lightly with peat moss, compost or good soil to help resist the seed washing or blowing away. For the first few weeks after reseeding, water regularly. While the seed is germinating and for the seedlings, watering several times a day, for a short period is optimal.

If you did not fertilize in late fall, apply fertilizer in the spring. Otherwise wait until mid-June or early July.

Our weather has been unusually warm and dry, so it is time to water. It is a bit early to turn on automatic sprinklers as March and April can be cold and even snowy. In the interim water by hand when the grass looks like it needs watering. Grass needs water when you see a bluish-gray color and footsteps that last on the grass. Consider managing your watering this way even in the warm weather, and just use your automatic controllers if you are out of town. You will save water and minimize the risk of under or overwatering.

Get your mower blade sharpened before mowing is needed.

Once the lawn starts growing you need to start mowing. Your cool season lawn will be healthier if you keep it 2 ½ to 3" long. Try not to mow more than one third of the height at any time. If you do need to cut more than 1/3 pick up the grass clippings for compost or mulch. (Do not use for mulch if you have applied herbicides.) Otherwise leave the clippings in place they will decompose rapidly.

Wait for a sunny day and relax with a lemonade while you enjoy the cooling effect of your beautiful lawn.

If you have lawn and garden questions, go to ask.extension.org for answers. To learn what events are coming up at the CSU Extension office in El Paso County, visit <http://elpasoco.colostate.edu/index.shtml>

For more information:

Notes #551 Basic Turf Management <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/mg/Gardennotes/551.pdf>

Coming up at Extension:

Seed Starting - Tuesday, April 18, 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm

A 1 -hour presentation on starting plants from seed, followed by Q&A and planting a tray of seeds. \$30.

Harvesting Rainwater - Saturday, May 13, 9:00 am to 11:00 am

Learn about the particulars of the new law and build a rain barrel to take home. \$60 covers training and all supplies. Registration closes May 5.

Fill, Thrill, Spill Floral Container Gardening - Thursday, May 18, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

Learn techniques to create and maintain sun/shade planters then take home a potful of plants that will bloom all summer. \$30

Register online at: EPCExtension.eventbrite.com

Registration is required for all classes.