

Good Growing Neighbours

We're growing healthier by the yard

We are committed to working toward a **healthier environment** by encouraging residents to practise these **simple steps** and reduce the need for pesticides in their lawn care.

10 tips for a healthy lawn

1. **Begin with healthy soil** A good lawn starts from the ground up. Proper soil preparation will minimize future weed problems. Adding compost will improve the water-holding capacity of sandy soils and open up air spaces in compacted clay soils. Nutrients and essential micro-organisms in compost help get the growing process off to a good start.
2. **Remove thatch** In the spring, remove excess thatch with a heavy rake or de-thatching equipment. This helps to open your lawn to water, air and nutrients. Mechanical dethatching does not need to be done every year.
3. **Mow high** Mow your lawn to about 6 cm (2 1/2 inches) to encourage better root growth and moisture retention. Keep your blade sharp! Your lawn will recover quicker if the grass is cleanly cut.
4. **Mulch your grass** Use a mulching mower and leave your grass clippings on your lawn. This provides a great source of slow-release nitrogen for your lawn.
5. **Water the roots** Proper irrigation gets to the root of the matter! Water only when your lawn is showing signs of wilting. Early morning or early evening are the best times to water, minimizing evaporation. Too much water starves your lawn of oxygen and invites disease. Lawns require only 2.5 cm (1 inch) of water per week.
6. **Develop a tolerance** A few weeds or insects won't harm your healthy lawn. Before pulling out the pesticides, try improving your lawn and doing some occasional hand weeding.
7. **Let your lawn breathe** It's a root awakening! Aerating your hard, compacted soil helps get water, nutrients and oxygen to the roots. Aeration combined with top dressing with compost is an excellent way to reduce thatch.
8. **Top dress and fertilize** Top dress your lawn with a thin layer of compost or topsoil. You can also add grass seed to your lawn at this time. Using compost or slow-release fertilizers will help promote vigorous lawn growth.
9. **Crowd out weeds** Healthy lawns are less susceptible to weed problems. Over seeding your lawn every fall keeps your grass thick and chokes out weeds.
10. **Low maintenance plants** Trees, shrubs, perennials, ground covers and wild flowers promote biodiversity in your yard. Consider other plants for ground covers in shaded or dry areas. Hostas and Ferns have it made in the shade while creeping juniper and thyme have fun in the sun.

visit **www.edmonton.ca/goodgrowing** or call **780-496-1476**
or **www.strathcona.ca** or call **780-464-8493**
or **www.stalbert.ca/good-growing-neighbours** or call **780-459-1735**

The City of Edmonton, City of St. Albert and Strathcona County are pleased to partner to bring you these important Good Growing tips for a healthier environment.

Strathcona County

City of St. Albert Cultivate Life

The City of Edmonton

Growing healthier by the yard





Take a grass roots approach to your lawn care this season by following these Good Growing seasonal lawn care tips. You'll reduce pesticide use – which means a healthier environment. Pesticides include herbicides for weed control, insecticides for insect control and fungicides that control certain plant diseases.

Spring Lawn Care Tips

It's that time of year when we get to work in our yards and gardens.

Aerate and dethatch

If the lawn is sparse and growing poorly or you notice that water pools in some areas, your soil is compacted. Aeration brings oxygen and nutrients down to the roots for better growth.

For most lawns, remove winter thatch with a fan rake. For lawns with heavy excess thatch, a mechanical dethatcher (power rake) may be used. Mechanical dethatching does not need to be done every year.



Fertilize

When choosing a fertilizer, consider using compost. Compost is an excellent organic fertilizer containing nutrients that does not leach into ground water.

If your preference is synthetic fertilizers, use a slow release fertilizer that breaks down slowly to feed your lawn over a longer period thus reducing the nutrients leaching and runoff. Do not apply synthetic fertilizers until the soil temperature of the lawn is above 20 celsius (mid May) as the grass will not absorb nutrients and the fertilizer will runoff with precipitation. **Weed and Feed** combination products are not recommended because they contain pesticides that are applied over the entire lawn to kill a few weeds but most of the pesticide will runoff into ground water. If you must use a pesticide, use a pre-mixed herbicide and spot spray weeds.

Advantages of Organic Fertilizers

- No leaching or runoff (into our rivers and lakes)
- Promotes beneficial bacteria growth
- Non burning, non toxic and non corrosive
- Provides organic matter and promotes water retention
- Slow, steady growth as opposed to flush growth

Control weeds

Control weeds by **hand digging** or **spot treating** with chemical weed control products. Treating the entire lawn with herbicide is not recommended.

Summer Lawn Care Tips



When temperatures are above 20 Celsius, lawn care becomes very important. Follow these easy and effective tips for summer lawn care.

Raise the mowing height

Mowing high, about 6 cm (2 1/2 inches), allows for better moisture retention. More leaf surface also produces more food for the plant through photosynthesis and eventually gives a better root system for the plants.

Over seed

Bare patches in your lawn allow weeds to move in. Work up the soil or add a bit of new soil, then seed or sod the area.

Mulch

Try grasscycling (mulching). Clippings about 1 to 2 cm long are left on the grass to provide a slow-release nitrogensource for your lawn. You may need to mow more often (every four to five days) but the time and energy saved not bagging grass, plus the decrease in grass going to the landfill is a win-win.

Water early morning or early evening

A good heavy watering once a week, about 2.5 cm (1 inch) helps to produce a deeper root system which is less likely to be damaged by drought. Light sprinklings promote a shallow root system which is easily damaged by drought. Over-watering starves the roots of needed oxygen.

Water does not need to be applied weekly if it rains. In fact, your lawn will tell you when it needs water. The grass blades will droop or wilt and may take on a grayish-green appearance. This is the time to water.

MOW & GO

TIPS Using compost as fertilizer is an organic way to promote healthy soil which means a healthy lawn.

Fall Lawn Care Tips



Top dress with compost and you will be off to a great start next spring. Healthy lawns start with healthy soil.

Aerate

If the soil under your lawn is compacted, water will pool and the grass may be sparse.

Top dress and over seed

Mow one last time before winter at 6 cm (2 1/2 inches). Spread a thin layer 1 cm (1/2 inch) deep of compost or topsoil over the grass. The nutrients in the top dressing will green up the lawn early next spring. Rake compost or good topsoil into the aerating holes.

Through over seeding you can change the species of your lawn grass to a more drought tolerant variety. Use a straight creeping red fescue seed or mix it with Kentucky bluegrass. Seed at a rate of 2 kg/100 sq m and lightly rake into the top dressing. The trick in seeding is to do it late enough in the season so that germination won't occur until spring. If germination occurs and is followed by a hard frost or winter, the seedlings may be killed.

Fertilize

Compost is an excellent organic fertilizer that will not leach into ground water. If your preference is to use synthetic fertilizers, use a slow release fertilizer. Do not apply synthetic fertilizers until the soil temperature is below 10 Celsius (mid September to mid October).

This fall application is known as dormant nitrogen application because you apply fertilizer when the grass is relatively dormant. The benefit is that some of the nitrogen is used to develop root growth in the fall and the remaining nitrogen is used for vegetative growth in the spring.

Provincial Ban on Weed & Feed Sale or Use

As of January 1, 2010 herbicide-fertilizer combination products, often referred to as weed and feed, is no longer sold or allowed to be used in Alberta. Weed and feed applications spread chemicals unnecessarily on your entire lawn and often seep into storm water systems, ultimately ending up in rivers and lakes.

Alternatives to Weed and Feed

The best way to prevent insect and weed problems is to follow Lawn Care Tips. Simple steps like fertilizing, mowing and watering properly go a long way. Instead of using weed and feed, use 'seed and feed; - just add good quality grass seed and slow release fertilizer in the spring and fall. If your lawn is growing vigorously, weeds have a difficult time competing.

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