

YEAR-ROUND CARE

JANUARY: Never walk on the lawn surface when it is frosty as the grass will be damaged or killed and when the surface is soft or wet this can lead to compaction and thereby root damage.

FEBRUARY: Have your mower serviced early to avoid the rush.

MARCH: Spike badly drained lawns using a fork or aerator and brush in a mixture of sand and peat or peat substitute. Mossy lawns can be treated with granular or liquid moss killer. Rake or scarify the lawn to remove the moss once it has died (it should turn black).

APRIL: Feed with a lawn fertiliser or a combined fertiliser/weed-killer. Do not apply a selective lawn weedkiller until two to three weeks after feeding. Mow established lawns with blades of the mower set not too low at first. On lawns where moss or weeds have been removed, cut grass as low as possible, rake the soil surface and then sow a good quality grass seed at 50g per sq m and rake in. The new grass will fill in the gaps, preventing further weed or moss growth and generally improving the appearance of the lawn.

MAY: Mow at least once a week. Continue to spike and feed if not already done in April.

JUNE: It may be necessary to mow at least once a week.

Further applications of a selective weedkiller may be required to kill persistent weeds such as clover.

JULY: Continue to mow but not too low in very dry conditions. Water in dry spells unless there is a water shortage. For small weeds use a spot lawn weedkiller or remove physically with a daisy grubber.

AUGUST: Mow as required and do not allow to dry out.

SEPTEMBER: Apply autumn lawn fertiliser. Re-sow worn patches and start to raise the mower blades when mowing. Apply a selective weedkiller if necessary. Repeat moss treatment; remove dead (black) moss by raking or scarifying and re-sow in April.

OCTOBER: In mild weather the lawn may still require regular mowing.

NOVEMBER: Sweep up any leaves as they fall as they may kill the grass if left. Make final mowing early in the month if required.

DECEMBER: Clean your mower, lubricate moving parts and lightly cover with oil any parts that may rust. Mark the mower with your post code and lock it away in a shed or garage.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Rake
- Leaf rake
- Lawn mower
- Circuit breaker
- Long-handled edging shears
- Half-moon edger
- Hose/twirling sprinkler
- Spring & autumn fertilisers
- Liquid fertiliser
- Lawn weedkiller
- Moss killer
- Stiff brush/besom
- Daisy grubber
- New lawns:**
- Fork
- Spade
- Grass seed/turf

For more information:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice
www.plantforlife.info

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THE EASY GUIDE TO

LAWN CARE



Photography: Tim Sandall/*The Garden*, Hozelock

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LAWNS

A large expanse of lawn can create a wonderful feeling of space in any garden. It blends perfectly with your colourful beds and provides space for your family and friends to play and relax. Once sown or laid properly, lawns need only watering and mowing during the summer.

If you already have a lawn in your garden, go to the section on Looking after your lawn. If you need to lay a new lawn, follow our advice below.

PREPARING FOR A NEW LAWN

- The best time to create a new lawn is in spring or early autumn. Measure the area before buying seeds or turf and remember to subtract borders and paths.
- Correct soil preparation is important for long-term success. Prepare a few weeks in advance of sowing or turving by eliminating any weeds, rubbish and large stones. Dig or rotovate and level the top 15-25cm, trying not to bring the subsoil to the top. If the soil is wet, clay or liable to water logging, drainage may be needed.
- Decide precisely the area you want and mark it out. It is better to prepare an area 15-25cm larger than required to enable the grass or turf to be cut to a firm edge when fully established.
- Dig the area over. Remove all weeds, including any with deep roots, and all large stones.
- Kill off any old grass and weeds using a general weedkiller.
- Sprinkle a balanced fertiliser over the area such as bonemeal.
- If possible, dig in compost or well-rotted manure and leave the ground to settle for a fortnight.
- Rake over the ground to make it as level as possible.
- Tread the ground flat by moving across the area in a waddling motion keeping your heels together. Get everyone to join in and the job's done in no time! Alternatively use a roller on large areas if the ground is dry.



SOWING A LAWN FROM SEED

- For best results, sow late March to May. Sowing is also possible in late September or October if autumn rains have started.
- Seeds are a cheaper option for a new lawn, but you will have to wait at least three months to use it and nine months before it is tough enough to withstand heavy wear and tear.
- Your garden centre or nursery will sell packets already prepared for a family lawn, a shady site or a fine lawn.
- Start at the furthest point of the lawn and sow evenly at 50g per sq m. A hand-held spreader will



- help you sow evenly.
- Rake a thin layer of soil over the seed and keep well watered.
- To deter birds and cats, place canes around the area strung with black cotton.

LAYING A LAWN WITH TURF

- If you want an immediate lawn, buy good quality turves. Cheaper options may contain weeds, pests and diseases.
- Turves are best laid in late summer or early spring. Avoid very wet or dry days or when the ground is frozen.
- Make sure they are delivered on the day you intend to lay them although they will keep for three to five days.
- Lay the first row along a straight edge. Then place a plank on them to spread your weight while you lay the second row.
- Stagger the squares to make the lawn look even.
- Water well or the edge of each turf will curl up.
- Avoid walking on your new lawn for about six weeks.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR LAWN

WATERING: Newly-planted lawns need plenty of water. A garden hose is essential but a spinning sprinkler that spreads water over a rectangular area makes life easy. Lawn irrigation will cost more if your water is metered.

- It's better to water thoroughly from time to time rather than little and often.
- Avoid watering in the heat of the day or during a drought.

MOWING: When your lawn is 8cm long, start mowing regularly.

- For the first mow of spring and for new grass, keep the blades as high as possible. Then gradually lower the blades.
- Do not mow when grass is wet or during a drought.
- For electric mowers, use a circuit breaker for your own safety should you mow over the lead.
- Use a half moon tool for cutting the edges of newly laid turf and existing lawns. Hold it vertically against the side of a flat board or against a garden line. Mark curves with a hosepipe. Long-handled edging shears can also be used to neaten borders.
- Raise the blades when mowing in very hot weather.
- Stop mowing once frosts start.

FEEDING: Make your lawn dense and lush by feeding it twice a year

in spring and autumn.

- Use a liquid lawn fertiliser to minimise grass scorching in very dry weather.
- In autumn, use a garden fork to create a series of holes to aerate the lawn. Then sprinkle in sand to create lasting drainage channels.

WEEDING: Keep weeds at bay by either hand weeding or applying a selective weedkiller that kills the weeds but not the grass. Moss can be killed with a moss killer, then raked out. Always follow the instructions carefully.

- Repair bare patches either with turves or by re-seeding.

IN WINTER: Never walk on frozen or frost-covered grass. It causes damage and can make the grass susceptible to disease.

- To avoid introducing diseases, keep the grass clear of leaves and debris with a springy rake.

TIME-SAVING TIPS:

- To distribute grass seeds evenly, fill a plastic flowerpot with seed and shake seeds out of the holes in the base.
- Use a mask when sowing to avoid breathing in the dust that comes out of the dust.
- Don't collect your clippings during dry spells to help conserve moisture.