

We're Here to Help!

The professional turf growers we deal with, as well as CSU Cooperative Extension make the point that to eliminate many of the diseases and weeds that affect lawns here the homeowner needs to follow good cultural practices. Follow the suggestions compiled in this brochure for a healthier lawn.

While we're not in the "turf business" at Phelan Gardens, we do carry support items such as fertilizers, chemicals and grass seed. Come see us, we are open seven days a week.

Free spreader rental with the purchase of any lawn fertilizer



Open Year-Round
7 days a week
4955 Austin Bluffs Parkway
80918 * 574-8058
www.phelangardens.com

- *local gardening information
- *upcoming classes & events
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Turf Management

Cultural Practices for Lawns



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Taking the Offensive in Turf Management

We've all heard the saying "the best defense is a good offense" applied to situations from national security to sports. It can also be applied to managing your bluegrass turf under Colorado climatic conditions.

Watering

In our dry Colorado climate year-round irrigation is **essential** for lawns to prosper.

During the growing season:

- Water to a depth of 6 to 8 inches as infrequently as possible depending on soil type.
- Clay soil needs two applications of water over a short period of time to avoid run off
- Sandy soil, due to its porous nature, will require more frequent watering.
- Ideally watering should be done between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m. so that the moisture has a chance to soak in and not be lost to evaporation. *Contrary to popular belief, night watering does not encourage lawn disease in our region.*
- **Winter watering is one of the most essential things to maintain a healthy lawn.** *Much of our snow evaporates into the dry air instead of soaking into the ground.*

A lawn maintained with less frequent, deep irrigation often withstands minor drought and generally has fewer diseases. It also prevents the moisture buildup necessary for weed seed germination.

Mowing

- Lawn height should be maintained between 2.5"- 3" year-round in Colorado. *Mowing less than 2 inches can result in less tolerance to drought conditions and increased possibilities of insects, diseases, and weed problems.*
- When mowing take off no more than 1/3rd of the grass blade height
- Let clippings fall back into the lawn. Clippings decompose quickly and provide a source of recycled nutrients and organic matter, promoting healthy turf. *The popular belief that clippings cause thatch buildup is also false.*
- A sharp lawnmower blade is important as the ragged cut of a dull blade can foster diseases.

Fertilizing

- Nitrogen is the most important nutrient for turf color and growth
- Don't over fertilize as doing so can lead to thatch buildup, less drought tolerance and decreased pest resistance
- Apply 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn area
- Applications should be made 4 times a year around the holidays of Easter, Memorial Day, 4th of July and Columbus Day
- If grass clippings are left on the lawn, the 3rd application might be skipped
- Under drought conditions a slow release fertilizer applied less often could be your best choice. If the grass does not respond to nitrogen fertilizer, a soil test will help to determine if other nutrients are lacking.

Aerating

Core cultivation, more commonly known as aerating, is very beneficial to the health of the lawn. Plugs that are 2 to 3 inches deep and spaced no more than 2 inches apart improve the root zone by relieving soil compaction and controlling thatch accumulation. Soak your lawn 48 hours prior to aeration to get the longest plug. Spring aeration is common but if disease is present, or there are areas of high traffic volume, a second aeration might be beneficial during the growing season. Apply Soil Activator after aeration to help feed your soil and help it make nutrients more available to your lawn.

Weed Control

Turfgrass under stress is more susceptible to infection and weed germination, but proper lawn management as discussed above can prevent or reduce most of the problems the homeowner might face. At times, however, in severe cases it is necessary to apply a fungicide or herbicide to eliminate the problem. This should be the course of last resort. Keep in mind that earthworms and other beneficial micro-organisms that help aerate the soil and improve grass health might be negatively impacted by chemical use. And indiscriminate use of herbicides can be harmful to surrounding vegetation such as trees, shrubs and perennials.