



# 5 steps TO A BETTER LAWN

A diligent care and maintenance routine will provide you with the lawn you've always wanted.

Every homeowner takes pride in their lawn. It provides hours of enjoyment, adds curb appeal to your property, and is a source of filtered, clean air. But a great lawn isn't always easy to get. Here are some tips from professionals that will help you achieve the picture-perfect, lush, green lawn you've always wanted.

## 1. Cutting and watering

As simple as it sounds, the most common maintenance task overlooked by homeowners is the basic cutting and watering of the lawn. It's important to cut the grass weekly to prevent overgrowing, which traps moisture and almost always leads to disease. If you've ever cut an overgrown lawn, you will have seen a yellowing effect at the bottom of the grass blades. This is the result of trapped moisture, which rots

the blades and the roots, causing disease.

Maintain a grass height of five to eight centimetres and remove excess clippings to prevent a moisture problem.

Although too much trapped moisture is bad for the grass, it's still important to maintain a proper watering regimen. Always do your watering early in the day, preferably between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m. This timing will allow the surface moisture to dry in the morning sunlight.

As a rule of thumb, applying one hour of irrigation to all areas, two to three times a week, will be enough to allow the soil to maintain enough moisture to sufficiently feed the roots. Don't apply a daily five- to 10-minute shower with a hose or sprinkler. This will not do the job, because most of that water will evaporate quickly, especially late in the day or when it's hot out.

Photo: John Deere JS60H Walk-Behind Mower

### 2. Soil

Different areas in the GTA have different soil conditions. Whether yours has clay-like or sandy soil, it's best to top-dress the lawn in the spring or fall with high-quality topsoil, compost or peat moss. A mixture would work best in building up a suitable topsoil base. It's important to evenly fan rake the surface to allow the top dressing to get to the bottom of the grass blades. Avoid using a heavy dressing, which will trap moisture. Also, don't top-dress the lawn in hot summer weather.

A soil conditioner treatment will improve soil conditions, especially where the earth is compacted, by helping to balance the pH level. Aeration is beneficial for both compacted and clay-like soil.

### 3. Fertilizer

Feeding your lawn a high nitrogen or blended fertilizer in the spring will start it off in the right direction. First, rake off any thatch build-up before you apply it, so the product will get into the soil. Always follow the package instructions and use the formulation best suited for the current weather conditions. Avoid using liquid fertilizers, as they tend to apply unevenly.

Fertilizer treatments should always be followed by a substantial watering to dissolve the product and wash it into the soil. Blended fertilizers can help to control weeds and crabgrass; however, domestic-grade products generally deliver very limited results.

Proper feeding, watering and cutting will strengthen your lawn and help to control weeds. To deal with those nasty weeds

and crabgrass, it's best to call in a professional who uses commercial products.

### 4. Insects and disease

All the effort in the world won't help you when you have white grubs eating the roots of your grass. Insects like chinch bug, sod webworm and white grub can infest your lawn and cause damage if they are not detected and treated in time.

Other diseases, such as summer blight and dollar spot, will cause discolouration and sometimes permanent damage to a lawn. A professional will have access to the pesticides needed to treat these problems.

### 5. Seeding or resodding

Overseeding your lawn in the spring or fall helps to fill in bald patches or thicken up a thinning lawn. Some top dressing will be required to protect the seeds from the sun and other elements, and you'll need to remove the patches of dead grass to give new sprouts a solid base. Use seeds that will match or complement the existing sod colour and type.

Seeding must be followed by frequent light watering until the sprouts grow tall enough to be cut. Avoid seeding shortly before or after you plan to apply fertilizer.

If all else fails and you decide to resod your lawn, be sure to exterminate any insect problem first and prepare a fertile soil base. Then follow these five steps to ensure success with your resodding project. 🌱

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■ *This article was provided by Greenigan's Lawn Care Inc. For more information, call 416-630-6630.*

### DID YOU HEAR...?

- Toronto is the most expensive city in Canada to live, although it ranks 79th out of 149 cities surveyed around the world.
- Calixa Lavalée's "O Canada" didn't officially become Canada's national anthem until 1980. It was first sung 100 years earlier.

