



Virginia Green Industry Council

For Immediate Use

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Electronic Version:
www.viriniagreen.org

Heat Alert - Tips To Save Your Lawn

As temperatures continue to be well above average, many of the* area's lawns are starting to show signs of damage. According to the Turf Resource Center, (TRC), an international not-for-profit organization based in suburban Chicago, homeowners can take steps to help their lawns survive and recover more quickly once the heat breaks. Recommendations will depend on the availability of water for the lawn. Where Water Is Adequate

To protect the economic and environmental value of a lawn, homeowners in areas where water is not heavily restricted are encouraged to take the following steps until temperatures return to lower levels: • reduce traffic on the lawn or spread the necessary traffic across as wide an area as possible • do not apply nitrogen fertilizers or pesticides

- water late at night or early in the morning
- water infrequently and deeply, avoiding frequent light sprinklings
- increase watering near buildings and other heat reflecting surfaces
- be cautious not to over-water, just because water is available
- mow only with a sharp blade
- raise the mowing height 25 percent or more
- mow often enough so that no more than the top one-third or one-half of the grass blade is cut at any mowing
- leave the clippings on the lawn as you mow, unless they produce clumps

Where Water Is Restricted

Just as trees prepare for winter by shedding their leaves, nature has provided grass multiple ways to protect itself from adverse weather, if homeowners are ready to accept the results to their lawn as readily as they accept leaf-less trees in winter.

Depending upon the overall availability of water for landscape use, homeowners can choose one of two alternatives during prolonged heat waves:

1. apply the available water only to a select area of the lawn that is most meaningful to the landscape;
2. apply no water to the lawn, allowing it to naturally go dormant and turn tan or brown.

With either choice, traffic should be prohibited from the lawn because it will not be able to withstand additional damage.

Turfgrass scientist have documented that more lawns are damaged or destroyed from over-watering than under-watering and that it is better to restrict irrigation than to intensively irrigate for a portion of a drought period and then miss several weeks. Brown lawns may actually be stronger than excessively or inadequately irrigated ones.

Once The Heat Breaks

When more normal temperatures return or water becomes more available, water immediately to begin restoring soil moisture, wash the grass blades and re-hydrate the dormant grass crowns and buds. Slow, deep soakings that avoid runoff are recommended by the Turfgrass Research Center.

As the grass begins to green-up, in a couple of weeks, apply a reduced amount of a balanced fertilizer. Ideally, the fertilizer ratio for nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium should be 4-1-2.

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In about a month, consider applying a herbicide to kill any weeds. Spot applications or total lawn applications will be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending upon the level of weed infestation. Eliminating competitive weeds will make more water and nutrients available to the grass so that it can thicken and ultimately crowd out future weeds.

Go to our consumer website for additional gardening information at www.VirginiaGardening.com

The Virginia Green Industry Council is the voice of the horticulture industry in the Commonwealth and is dedicated to enhancing the beauty of the state's environment, the well-being of our citizens, improving our state's economy, and improving the health and wellness for everyone in Virginia. The Council is made up of providers and consumers of horticultural products and services. The Council works to provide public and industry education, environmental guidelines and other information that will keep Virginia green and growing. For more information, visit www.viriniagreen.org. 540-382-0943 FAX: 540-382-2716

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