

# Springtime Lawn Enjoyment

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*When spring arrives everyone is dying to get out of the house and enjoy the yard and that nice green grass. However, in order to have nice green grass to enjoy, there may be a few things that need to be done. There are two different sets of instructions for this depending on your lawn.*

## **1. If you have measured your lawn area, done soil tests, followed their recommendations, and the lawn is looking good:**

.....and the latest test showed that your pH and nutrient levels are good, then all you need to do is follow the test recommendations for a May 15 fertilization. Team this with sharp blades on a mower set to cut at 2-3 inches and you are on your way.

\*It is recommended that you fertilize at half the rate about May 15 because a heavy fertilizer in the spring will cause excessive spring growth that can do more damage than good to the grass and cause you to mow quite frequently. Heavy fertilizing in the spring will bring the roots close to the surface to get the nutrients and then, when the weather gets hot and dry, the roots dry out faster. The fertilizer recommendation is usually for a 4-1-2 ratio (such as 16-4-8 or 24-6-12). The only time weed & feed fertilizer is recommended is for the October application as it contains too much fertilizer for the other applications.

## **2. If you have not done soil tests and your lawn does not look great, but you don't want to dig it up:**

....the first and most important steps are to measure your lawn area and do a soil test. A soil test will determine which nutrients are available in the soil and give recommendations for fertilizer applications. It will also tell you if the pH range is correct for the plants you are planning to grow. If the pH is not in the correct range the plants will not be able to use the fertilizer no matter how much you spread - a big waste of your time and money! The soil test should be done early so the results will arrive before you start your spring maintenance. The instructions, forms, and boxes are available at your county Extension office. You should submit one sample each for the front and back yards. If you have a large yard with varied conditions and are willing to treat each section individually you can submit a sample for each area. Different plants have different requirements so, for best results, you should also submit soil samples for vegetable and flower gardens. To determine the type of soil you have, which you need to know for completing the form, put one cup of the soil test mix in a quart jar, fill it with water and shake. The sand will sink to the bottom in 40 seconds, the silt will settle within one hour, and the clay will settle slowly over a couple of days. Your soil type is whichever there is the most of in the jar. Soil tests should be done every two to three years.

Read the \*paragraph above and follow the fertilizer recommendations that come with the soil sample.

If lime is needed to raise the pH to the ideal 6.2, the test results will tell you how much to apply. If more than 50lbs/1000sq.ft. is recommended, apply it in several applications of 50lbs/1,000 sq.ft. each, at intervals of 1 to 6 months, until the full amount is applied. Applying more than that at one time will burn the grass. Also, lime should be spread 2-3 weeks before or after the fertilizer-not at the same time. Pelletized lime is the easiest to use when spreading it on an established lawn. Ground limestone is cheaper but messier and recommended if you are starting from scratch and tilling the soil. If the test shows that magnesium levels are low use dolomite lime. Lime can be applied at any time of the year that the soil is not frozen.

If you have a lot of weeds in the lawn and want to get rid of them, call the Extension office for current chemical recommendations for the type of grass and weeds you have. Some weeds are treated in the spring and some are treated in the fall. Do not spray weed killer on newly seeded lawns until the grass has been mowed at least twice or it could be damaged and be careful not to get sprays on plants you want to keep. Mark and use one sprayer for "weed killers only" because the chemical residues could kill plants later when spraying for insects or diseases.