

# LAWN CARE GUIDE

MONTH	CARE	WATERING	FERTILIZING	PROBLEMS
<b>JANUARY</b>	<p>Don't put the mower away. The grass may not be growing except in the warmer areas of the state, but weeds can be growing anywhere. A mowing every few weeks keeps the unwanted greenery under control and the mower in good shape.</p>	<p>If the grass is brown or not making much growth, it's using very little water. Turn off the automatic system and check the soil to determine water needs. Make sure the soil is moist before expected freezes. Turn off the water during the freeze.</p>	<p>This is usually a fertilizer free month for permanent lawn grasses. If the winter is quite mild and the grass begins to grow, some yellowing might be noted. You can apply iron or half the normal rate of a lawn fertilizer just to renew the green.</p>	<p>Most insects are slowed by the cooler weather. If the weather is warm, you might spot the disease brown patch, a disease caused by a fungus living in most soils. It causes large, brown, circular areas to develop. Control with a fungicide. Weed control with mowing. Most selective weed control should be delayed until later when the turf is less likely to be affected.</p>
<b>FEBRUARY</b>	<p>Mow all lawns as needed. If the lawn needs cutting the day it is installed, you can mow it. The general rule is to cut the coarse grasses of St. Augustine and bahia at the highest mower setting (usually 3 to 4 inch).</p>	<p>Established turf won't need a lot of water at this time of year. This is a good time to train your lawn to produce a deep root system. Allow grass to undergo water stress to develop longer roots, which absorb more water. Most home lawns can last 5-7 days or more between watering at this time of year with a deep root system.</p>	<p>First-of-the-year feedings start in South Florida and work their way northward this month. When the grass blades are dry, apply a fertilizer with a 16-4-8, 13-3-13, 15-0-15, or similar analysis. Apply as directed. Water after the application. A few weed-and-feed fertilizers are made to apply to damp lawns-follow label directions.</p>	<p>It's crabgrass-control time throughout much of the state. The trick to preventing this weed is to prevent seed germination. Remove all growing crabgrass and dormant runners. Apply a preemergence herbicide made for use with your lawn type. Follow label instructions. Watch for brown patch in lawns. Look for chinch bugs in yellowing spots in St. Augustine lawns.</p>
<b>MARCH</b>	<p>Lawns grow rapidly. Begin mowing all grasses at the preferred height. A close cut is not necessary. To remove brown grass blades, you can give the turf a good handraking or rent a power rake. Avoid using vertical mower to remove brown blades. These mowers can remove runners and more.</p>	<p>Rains have been limited since fall, and now that the weather is hotter, check out the irrigation system to make sure it hits all areas of the lawn and that heads are working properly. Look for dry areas. Set out cups to catch water, if there is not 1/2 inch or more for each cycle, change the time operated. Adjust heads that are watering streets and sidewalks.</p>	<p>Complete all spring feedings at this time of year. This is one of two times all lawns types should get a complete fertilizer. If your lawn turns yellow immediately after a spring feeding, it could have an iron deficiency. Apply a liquid or granular iron-only fertilizer. Check the soil acidity. If possible, adjust the pH to the 5.5 to 6.0 range.</p>	<p>Chinch bugs are becoming very active in St. Augustine grass lawns. They begin mounting large populations in spring. If weeds are becoming a problem, this is the time to use weed-and-feed fertilizers. Do not apply both a regular fertilizer and a weed-and-feed product-apply one or the other. If you use a fertilizer by itself, then liquid weed control products are available. Have your weeds identified to make sure the product you choose will be effective.</p>
<b>APRIL</b>	<p>Soil aeration is sometimes recommended. It's sort of hard to picture a sandy soil not having enough air, but it may be a problem in clay and very organic soils. Seldom do we aerate sandy soils to let in air, but we may want to let in water. Use an aerator only if you really have reason.</p>	<p>It's the dry time of year. Wait until spots in the lawn start to turn gray-green and the leaves curl to water the entire lawn. Give the lawn a thorough soaking of 1/2 to 3/4 inch water. Water during the early morning hours. Stop all feedings during the very dry times. Keep your mower at the highest setting for the grass type. Do not apply weedkillers to stressed lawns during drought.</p>	<p>All spring feedings should be completed early in the month. If the lawn is yellowish, this may be your first hint that you forgot a feeding. There is still time to use a complete fertilizer, but hurry. If the bahia turf is showing some yellowing and you applied a spring fertilizer, an iron-only feeding can be applied.</p>	<p>This is the last chance to do selective weed control and not affect your turf. Some products specifically say on the label not to apply "when the weather is hot" or "after a certain date." Make sure lawn is moist and healthy when applying any selective herbicide so there will be no damage to grass. Lawn caterpillars may be starting to affect some lawns. The three most common are the sod webworm, armyworm, and grass hopper.</p>

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<b>MAY</b>	Mowing is now one of your major chores. Keep the lawnmower blade sharpe. Cut the grass at the same recommended height year-round. Mow in different directions each time to prevent forming ruts in the lawn. Leave the clippings on the lawn, this returns up to one feeding a year to the turf.	The rainy season may return this month, but you can never be sure exactly when it will return. Until the storms start, just water as usual. Now is a good time to recheck the watering system and to look for dry spots. Sometimes watering systems are inadequate during very dry weather. In this case, it's best to do some handwatering.	Some very vigorous and shallow-rooted grasses are ready for another feeding at this time of year. Bermudagrass can have another complete fertilizer application. Give zoysia grass lawns a nitrogen-only feeding. Apply carefully and water in to prevent damage to the lawns.	It's the beginning of the mole cricket season for Bermuda, bahia, and zoysia lawns. Other lawns can be disturbed by the big brown insects, but damage is usually minimal. Other pests may be very active too. Check your lawn for chinch bugs in St. Augustinegrass lawns, dollar spot in Bermuda turf, lawn caterpillars, mushrooms, and slime mold.
<b>JUNE</b>	Keep the mower blade sharp. The blade should be sharpened at least once a month. Bahia lawns may be a little tough and can dull a blade in less than a month, and if the mower picks up sand, you may need to check and sharpen the blade more often.	Check any brown spots that may indicate inadequate water. Don't just reach for a pesticide. Brown areas may not be bugs but just dry soil. Use a trowel to dig down in the ground. If the soil feels hot and very loose, you have dry soil. If needed make sprinkler adjustments.	If you missed feeding this spring, you can catch up with a light application during June. The higher-maintenance grasses may need a feeding if you forgot the May applications. Some yellowing and lighter-green turf can be expected as the spring fertilizer nutrients are used by the grass. A quick remedy is iron-only application.	Mole crickets are becoming more obvious, especially in bahia and Bermuda lawns. The ground begins to feel soft under the grass, giving the first hint the insects may be present. Check to see if chinch bugs or lawn caterpillars are present in your lawn. Most selective weed control use is over. Weedkillers during the hot weather may damage the turf. Mow, dig out, or spot-kill weeds with herbicides.
<b>JULY</b>	Give your mower a midsummer checkup. If it's been a month since the last oil change, renew it. After a month of cutting, your blade should be sharpened. Check the air filter, and oil all cables to keep the mower in good operating condition.	Keep track of the rainfall. A rain gauge is a handy item to have. You need to have received 1/4 inch of rainfall to be counted as a significant amount of moisture. If in doubt about water needs, let the grass tell you when it's dry. Water when spots begin to turn gray-green and leaves start to fold.	Yellow or light-green lawns are normal this month. Iron-only applications can be made on bahiagrass and St. Augustinegrass, a little iron may be helpful during the summer months. 2 evenly spaced applications are recommended this time of year. Zoysia and Bermuda are scheduled for a nitrogen-only feeding.	One disease that runs rampant during the summer is "Take-All Root Rot." It selects the weaker turf and causes yellowing of the foliage by rotting the root system. Lawns that receive too much water, are competing with other plants, have nematode problems, and have been under general stress are very susceptible. Check for chinch bugs, lawn caterpillars, and mole crickets.
<b>AUGUST</b>	Water newly seeded lawns whenever the surface soil begins to be dry to the touch. Gradually reduce the watering to an as-needed basis after 6 to 8 weeks. Mow the lawn as needed-usually, a vigorous bahia lawn requires this 3-4 weeks after germination. Begin first feedings at this time as well.	The summer rains can be counted on for most of the water. Check the lawn for dry spots and water if needed. Turn you sprinkler on and make sure it is working properly. When you do water, remember to apply 1/2 to 3/4 inch and water only during the early-morning hours.	Most lawn grasses will not receive a major feeding at this time unless you forgot an earlier fertilizer application. Carpetgrass can get a full fertilizer application at this time. If the lawns begin to yellow, you can apply a second iron-only feeding of the summer. This may be all the grass needs to give it a little color that is a brighter green.	A healthy lawn is more resistant to pest problems, but somehow the sod webworms, root rots, and others still cause some damage. Check the lawn weekly for signs of decline. Look for chinch bugs, lawn caterpillars, mole crickets, and the fungus called "Take-All Root Rot." When early damage is noted take the appropriate control. Delay the use of selective weed-control products another month or two.

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<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	Don't let up on the mowing. Allowing it to get overgrown and then giving it a severe cutting is a real shock to the grass. When you do mow, leave the clippings on the lawn unless they form piles due to infrequent mowing. Leaving clippings provides nutrients the lawn can use.	September is a damp month, at least for the first few weeks. As fall arrives, the drier season starts and you may have to do the watering. Make sure that when it rains, you are receiving 1/4 inch or more of moisture. Water when the grass begins to dry in spots and the grass blades begin to fold together. Check sprinkler heads.	Just about every lawn is now ready for the fall feeding. It is time to apply a complete fertilizer. This is a product with nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Select a product labeled for lawn feeding. A 16-4-8, 13-3-13, 15-0-15, or similar product. Apply the fertilizer to a dry lawn. Evenly distribute and water the lawn after feeding.	You can count on summer pests affecting your lawn for at least one more month. Make weekly inspections and look for declining turf. Take the needed steps to control chinch bugs, lawn caterpillars, mole crickets, and "Take-All Root Rot." Wait until the later part of the month to begin selective weed control. You may want to delay the application of fertilizers with the weedkillers until the very end of the month. Until then, pull or spot-treat weeds.
<b>OCTOBER</b>	Keep up the mowing. The grass will not stop producing new growth until the weather really gets cool. You can expect to mow most coarse turf types at least once a week and the finer-bladed types twice a week. Check your lawnmower blade.	It is getting drier, but there will be periods of downpours. Water whenever spots in the lawn start to dry and fold their leaf blades. Let the lawn tell you when it is dry. When yellowing occurs due to flooding, try an iron application to renew the green.	If you forgot the September feeding or have been waiting to apply a weed-and-feed product, now is the time. If you are applying any of these products to a bahiagrass lawn, do it soon, as the grass will soon slow growth. Bermuda lawns are also ready for a nitrogen-only feeding. Water after feeding.	Some pests will be slowing down this time of year. Most leaf spotting of St. Augustinegrass lawns is over when the nights become a little cooler and the rainy season ends. "Take-All Root Rot" decreases with the end of frequent rains. But there are a few pests that linger, chinch bugs, lawn caterpillars, and mole crickets. This is also a time when you can apply some of the selective weed-control products. Follow label instructions.
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	For the central and southern parts of the state, it's mowing as usual. The general rule: When grass grows one third taller, it's time to do the mowing. In most of Florida, we never put the mower to rest.	Suddenly it's the dry time of year, with only a few rainy days each month. Luckily, it is a cooler season, and the days are shorter. When spots in the lawn begin to dry, water the entire lawn. Water until 1/2 to 3/4 inch of moisture has been provided. Automatic systems may need to only run 1 to 2 times a week.	Zoysia lawns might get an extra nitrogen feeding at this time of year, but the other grasses should be fine unless you have missed a feeding. Many gardeners with bahia and St. Augustine lawns like to do something to increase winter hardiness. It's recommended to apply a potassium-only fertilizer about 30 days before the first frost.	Grubs have not been a common Florida pest for years, but recently they have been damaging turf. Grubs are white with a brown head and have three pairs of legs at the front of the body. They live underground, feeding on roots. Look for chinch bugs in St. Augustine lawns. Lawn caterpillars may be chewing leaf blades. Mole crickets are mature and about an inch long at this time.
<b>DECEMBER</b>	Mowing is continued as needed to maintain the normal height of the lawn. It is also needed to control weeds in many turfgrasses. Do not change the height of the mower blade. Keep it at the same level year-round.	It's a dry but cool time of year. Most lawns need only one or two waterings a week. If cold weather is expected, it's best to water the lawn to prevent drying from associated winds. Apply 1/2 to 3/4 inch water at each irrigation.	Only Bermuda lawns normally need a feeding at this time of year. Use a nitrogen-only fertilizer at the label rate to apply 1 pound of actual nitrogen to each 1,000 square feet of turf.	Only brown patch is active at this time of year. Gardeners are more likely to experience frost or freeze damage in cooler areas of the state. This damage occurs after cold nights and appears as a browning of the turf. When grass is damaged, maintain a moist but not abnormally wet soil. Do not apply special feedings. Refrain from making pesticide applications. Mow as needed.

*\*This lawn care guide text came from the revised edition "Month-By-Month Gardening in Florida" written by Tom MacCubbin*