

BERMUDAGRASS CALENDAR

This calendar of suggested management practices is designed to assist you in the seasonal care of your lawn. Location, terrain, soil type and condition, age of the lawn, previous lawn care, and other factors affect turf performance. For these reasons, the following management practices and dates should be adjusted to suit your particular home lawn conditions.

MARCH – MAY

MOWING: Mow the lawn when it first turns green in the spring with a reel mower set at $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch or a rotary mower set as low as possible without scalping. Mow before the grass gets taller than $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches. Then practice grasscycling. Grasscycling is simply leaving grass clippings on your lawn. Grass clippings decompose quickly and can provide up to 25 percent of the lawn's fertilizer needs. If prolonged rain or other factors prevent frequent mowing and clippings are too plentiful to leave on the lawn, they can be collected and used as mulch. Whatever you do, don't bag them! Grass clippings do not belong in landfills.

FERTILIZATION: Apply 1 pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet several weeks after the grass turns green. Submit a soil sample to determine nutrient and lime requirements. In the absence of a soil test, use a complete nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (N-P-K) turf-grade fertilizer with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio (for example, 12-4-8 or 16-4-8). (Contact your county Cooperative Extension Center for details.) Apply lime if suggested. To determine the amount of product needed to apply 1 pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet, divide 100 by the first number in the fertilizer ratio. For example, for a 16-4-8 fertilizer, divide 100 by 16. The result is 6.25 pounds of product per thousand square feet: $100/16 = 6.25$

IRRIGATION: Water to a soil depth of 4 to 6 inches. Probe with a screwdriver to determine moisture depth. Bermudagrass needs a weekly application of about 1 to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches of water. On sandy soils it often requires more frequent watering, for example, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of water every third day. It is often necessary to irrigate an area for 3 to 5 hours to apply 1 inch of water. (It requires 640 gallons of water to deliver 1 inch of water per thousand square feet.) Because clay soils accept water slowly, irrigate just until runoff occurs, wait $\frac{1}{2}$ hour until the water has been absorbed, and then continue irrigating until the desired depth or amount is obtained. A dark bluish gray color, footprinting, and wilted, folded, or curled leaves indicate that it is time to water. Proper irrigation may prevent or reduce pest problems and environmental stress later in the summer.

WEED CONTROL: Apply preemergence herbicides to control crabgrass, goosegrass, and foxtail by the time the dogwoods are in full bloom. Apply postemergence herbicides in May as needed to control summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds such as knotweed, spurge, and lespedeza. Products containing two or three broadleaf herbicides usually control several different broadleaf weeds in a lawn more effectively. Be sure the product is labeled for use on bermudagrass. Apply postemergence herbicides only when weeds are present, and wait until three weeks after the lawn becomes green.

INSECT CONTROL: Check for white grubs and control them if necessary. (See White Grubs in Turf, ENT/ORT-67, AG-366).

THATCH REMOVAL: Vertically mow in May to remove the thatch (layer of undecayed grass) after the lawn becomes green if the thatch is more than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick.

RENOVATION: Replant large bare areas using sod or sprigs (3 to 5 bushels per thousand square feet). Common bermudagrass can be seeded using hulled bermudagrass at 1 to 2 pounds per thousand square feet. (see Carolina Lawns, AG-69).

JUNE – AUGUST

MOWING: Follow the March-May mowing guidelines

FERTILIZATION: Apply 1 pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet every 4 to 6 weeks using the March through May fertilizing guidelines.

IRRIGATION: Follow the March through May irrigation guidelines.

WEED CONTROL: Apply postemergence herbicides as needed to control summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds such as knotweed, spurge, and lespedeza. Crabgrass, goosegrass, dallisgrass, nutsedge, annual sedges, and sandbur can be controlled with postemergence grass control herbicides. Two or three applications 7 to 10 days apart are required for effective control. Apply herbicides only when weeds are present, the grass is actively growing, and the lawn is not suffering from drought stress.

INSECT CONTROL: Follow the March through May insect control guidelines. August is the best time to control white grubs because they are small and close to the soil surface.

THATCH REMOVAL: Vertically mow to remove the thatch if it is more than ½ inch thick. Thatch can be removed monthly if the lawn has sufficient time to recover.

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER

MOWING: Mow the lawn following the March through May guidelines until several weeks before the first expected frost. Raise the mowing height ½ inch as winter approaches if the lawn will not be overseeded. Mowing height is usually raised in mid- to late September in the piedmont. Mowing height of lawns in the western and northwestern areas of the piedmont may be raised one to two weeks earlier, whereas mowing height in the south central and southeastern regions may be raised one to two weeks later.

FERTILIZATION: Apply no more than ½ pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet in September, four to six weeks before the first expected frost. Use a low-nitrogen, high-potassium fertilizer such as a 5-10-30, or supplement a nitrogen fertilizer source with 1 pound of potash (K₂O) using 1.6 pounds of muriate of potash (0-0-60), 2 pounds of potassium sulfate (0-0-50), or 5 pounds of sul-po-mag (0-0-22) per thousand square feet.

To determine the amount of product required to apply 1 pound of potash per thousand feet, divide 100 by the third number in the fertilizer ratio. For example, for a 6-6-12 fertilizer, divide 100 by 12. The result is 8.3 pounds of product per thousand square feet: $100/12 = 8.3$

IRRIGATION: Follow the March through May irrigation guidelines. Dormant bermudagrass may need to be watered periodically when warm, windy weather prevails.

WEED CONTROL: Apply preemergence or postemergence herbicides as needed to control winter annual and perennial broadleaf weeds such as chickweed and henbit. Preemergence herbicides do not control existing perennial weeds. Apply postemergence herbicides only when weeds are present. Do not apply herbicides designed to control annual bluegrass if the lawn is to be overseeded with ryegrass.

INSECT CONTROL: Follow the March-May insect control guidelines.

DECEMBER - FEBRUARY

MOWING: Mow overseeded bermudagrass at 1 inch before the grass gets taller than 1½ inches. Recycle nutrients by not collecting the clippings unless they accumulate heavily on the surface. Dormant bermudagrass that has not been overseeded need not be mowed.

FERTILIZATION: Do not fertilize bermudagrass that has not been overseeded. For overseeded bermudagrass, apply ½ pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet in December and February. In the absence of a soil test, use a complete (N-P-K) turf-grade fertilizer with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio (for example, 12-4-8 or 16-4-8).

IRRIGATION: Dormant bermudagrass may have to be watered periodically to prevent desiccation, especially when warm, windy weather prevails. Watering is particularly important for lawns that have been overseeded.

WEED CONTROL: Apply broadleaf herbicides as needed to control weed such as chickweed, henbit, and hop clover. Selective herbicides can be applied in November or December to lawns that have not been overseeded to control annual bluegrass(*Poa annua*) and several winter annual broadleaf weeds.

DISCLAIMER: Recommendations for the use of agricultural chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service agent.

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