



August Tips

LAWNS AND LANDSCAPING

by Diane Relf, Extension Specialist, Environmental Horticulture

- If you irrigate your lawn, consider reducing overall lawn size to save water. For example, try joining trees into beds with shrubs and ground covers. Also, try to eliminate hard-to-irrigate lawn areas, such as narrow strips between a walkway and a building, or irregularly shaped areas.
- To maintain a healthy lawn and reduce the potential for water contamination, it is important to fertilize at the right time. Fertilize cool-season lawns (Kentucky bluegrass, fescue, ryegrass) in the fall fertilize warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, centipedegrass) in the summer.
- Plants signal their need for water: turf grass lies flat after being walked on and many plants lose their shine and droop a little.
- When watering lawns during hot weather, do it early in the morning. Otherwise, much of the water will evaporate from the grass before the plants get to use it. To further avoid excess evaporation, use a sprinkler that produces large drops of water instead of a fine mist.
- Among the cool-season grasses, tall fescue consumes 10 percent more water than bluegrass. Rye grass uses approximately the same amount of water as bluegrass. Grass needs watering if footprints remain visible, or the overall color turns gray-green.
- If you plan to do some landscape planting this fall, now is a good time to decide on the plants to use and how to arrange them. Since the average American family moves every five years, it makes sense to buy the largest plants you can afford and enjoy them now.
- Be sure to mow the lawn before going on vacation. If you will be gone over two weeks, arrange to have it cut while you are away. If you don't, too much of the top growth will be removed at the next mowing. Removal of more than 1/3 of the growth at one time weakens the plant.
- Plan to rejuvenate or plant home lawns in the fall.
- If you wish to kill grass and weeds growing through cracks in patios, garden walks, or driveways, be extremely cautious. Many weed killers will leach into surrounding areas and damage your ornamentals or lawn. Pulling the weeds is the safest action, but you may wish to use a contact herbicide, such as those containing glyphosate.

Monthly Tips have been prepared since 1986 by various staff of the Office of Consumer Horticulture including Ellen Bennett, Michelle Buckstrup, Susan Day, Susan DeBolt, Sharon Dendy, Kate Dobbs, Sheri Dom, David Gravel, Virginia Nathan, Jenny Shuster, Ellen Silva, and Ruth Sorenson. Resource material for the development of this information includes the Virginia Master Gardener Handbook; Extension Publications and newsletters from VCE, numerous other states, and the USDA; and an extensive library of over 900 books, magazines and journals. Project funded by The Virginia Gardener Newsletter subscription fees. Diane Relf, Project Director and Content Specialist.

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