

Turfgrass Maintenance Calendars for Maryland Lawns

In May of 2011, Governor Martin O'Malley signed into law the Fertilizer Use Act of 2011. The law is being implemented to reduce the amount of nutrients that wash and leach into the Chesapeake Bay. The following maintenance calendars reflect the changes put in place by the legislation. For additional information on the new law read [the Fertilizer Use Act of 2011](#), MDA's page on [Maryland's Lawn Fertilizer Law](#), and [Main Provisions of a Maryland Lawn Fertilizer Bill](#). (<http://bit.ly/ChesBayBillSummary>)

Cool Season Turf: Fescues and Kentucky bluegrass

Late Summer to Early Fall

- Perform a soil test in preparation for lawn renovation projects. The soil testing labs listed in our soil testing publication ([HG 110](#), [Selecting and Using a Soil Testing Laboratory](#)) are not located in Maryland and therefore, the nitrogen recommendation may not be in accordance with the Fertilizer Use Act of 2011. *Apply nitrogen based on University of Maryland Extension (UME) fertilizer recommendations found in [Table 1](#).*
- Core aerate and overseed if needed. See [HG 102](#), [Lawn Establishment, Renovation and Overseeding](#), and watch our [lawn renovation video](#). Both are found on the HGIC website.
- Consider planting groundcovers in areas where grass does not grow well such as heavy shade or sunny slopes.
- Tall fescue is the recommended all-purpose grass species for Maryland for sun and partial sun locations. Avoid seed mixtures that contain perennial ryegrass or annual ryegrass.
- Selectively treat difficult to control weeds such as ground ivy, a.k.a. creeping Charlie, with a liquid broadleaf weed herbicide. September to early October is a good time for controlling difficult weeds because plants will move foods from the leaves along with the herbicide down to their root system.

- Apply lime according to soil test results. Fall application is best because winter snow and rain, combined with the freezing and thawing of soil, help to incorporate the lime into the soil.
- Fertilize according to the fertilizer schedule in [Table 1](#).

Late Fall

- Rake and remove fallen leaves or use a mulching mower to chop the leaves up and let them decompose on your lawn. Bagged leaves can be composted or used in ornamental or vegetable beds as a winter mulch.
- Mow your lawn 1/2 - 1 inch shorter than the usual height to discourage matted grass and snow mold.
- The last lawn fertilizer application should be made no later than November 15th, as stated in [the fertilizer Use Act of 2011](#).

Winter

- Avoid foot traffic on frozen turf, as injury to the crowns may occur.
- Maintain your lawn mower. Blades should be sharpened to avoid grass blade injury.
- Do not use urea or other fertilizer as a deicing material on walkways or driveways. See [FS 707](#), [Melting Ice Safely](#).

Spring

- Apply crabgrass preemergent herbicide if you experienced significant crabgrass in your lawn last summer. Crabgrass seeds germinate when soil temperatures average 55° F. for seven days to ten days. Preemergents should be applied mid-March through mid-April depending on where you are located in the State. Look for products that do not contain fertilizer. If you do use a 'weed and feed', the fertilizer contained in the product needs to be included in the total amount of nitrogen that you apply to your lawn for the year. A preemergent herbicide cannot be applied if you plan on reseeding.

- Reseed bare spots in March. Major lawn renovation projects should be postponed until late summer or early fall.
- If nitrogen fertilizer was applied in the fall, a spring application should not be necessary. Reasons for an optional spring application include: the lawn was seeded the previous fall, grass clippings are removed during the growing season, the lawn is subject to heavy foot traffic, it is recovering from a pest or disease problem, there is a severe crabgrass problem, or the previous fall fertilizer application was not applied. See the UME fertilizer schedule in [Table 1](#).
- Hand pull or spot treat broadleaf weeds with liquid broadleaf weed herbicides. Follow label directions.
- Proper mowing is very important in maintaining healthy turf. Mow on a regular basis, never remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade at each mowing, and keep tall fescue mowed to a height of 3 inches during the growing season. Lawns that are mowed to a height of 3 inches have less crabgrass and fewer weeds.

Table 1. UME Turf Fertilizer Recommendations		
Grass Type	Date of Application	Pounds of nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft.
Tall fescue	September/October	0.9 - 1.8 lbs a year- 0.9 lb. in September and 0.9 lb. in October
Kentucky bluegrass	September/October	0.9 - 1.8 lbs a year- 0.9 lb. in September and 0.9 lbs. in October
Fine fescue	October	0.9 lb.
Zoysiagrass	June	0.9 lb.
Bermudagrass	June/July	0.9 lb. in June and 0.9 in July
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If clippings are left on the lawn you may only need one application per year regardless of your lawn's age. • Healthy lawns established longer than twelve years may only need one application per year. • No fertilizer can be applied between November 15 and March 1. 		
Optional Turf Applications		
Grass Type	Date of Application	Pounds of nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft.
Tall fescue	Late May or early June	0.5 to 0.9 lb.
Fine fescue	Late May or early June	0.5 lb.
Kentucky bluegrass	Late May or early June	0.5 to 0.9 lb.
Zoysiagrass	July or August	0.5 to 0.9 lb.
Bermudagrass		
Tall fescue and particularly Kentucky bluegrass may need moderate additional applications of fertilizer to maintain density and reduce pest and weed problems. The optional applications may help your lawn if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clippings are removed • there is a severe crabgrass problem • the lawn is heavily used • there has been pest or other damage • lawn was seeded the previous fall • the previous fall fertilization was missed 		

Summer

- Established tall fescue lawns do not need to be irrigated. They will go dormant during hot, dry weather and green up again when cooler temperatures arrive and rainfall increases.
- Raise mower height 1/2 - 1 inch during periods of hot, dry weather. Do not mow dormant lawns.
- Leave grassclippings to naturally decompose on your lawn. This will not create a thatch build-up or cause disease but will add organic matter and contribute to your lawn's nitrogen requirement.
- Never fertilize turfgrass during the summer.

Warm Season Turf- Zoysia and Bermudagrass

Spring

- Perform a soil test in preparation for lawn renovation projects. The soil testing labs listed in our soil testing publication ([HG 110](#)) are not located in Maryland and therefore, the nitrogen recommendation may not be in accordance with the [Fertilizer Use Act of 2011](#). *Apply nitrogen based on University of Maryland Extension (UME) fertilizer recommendations found in [Table 1](#).*
- Control wild onions and garlic with a broadleaf weed control herbicide containing 2, 4-D, MCPP, and dicamba

(Trimec®).

- Apply fertilizer after spring green up, starting in June. See [Table 1](#).
- May or June is the optimal time for starting a warm season lawn. Zoysia and bermudagrass can be started from plugs, sprigs or seed.
- Water newly planted lawns daily to keep the area moist until roots develop. Then water less frequently but for a longer period of time to ensure the roots are receiving water.
- Rent a core aerator or vertical mower to remove thatch when the thatch layer exceeds 1/2 inch.

Summer

- Mow turf to a height between 1/2 - 1 inch.

Fall

- Rake leaves and add them to your compost bin or run them over with a mulching mower and allow them to decompose in place.
- Warm season grasses will go dormant immediately after the first frost of the season.

Reviewed by: Jon Traunfeld, UME Home and Garden Information Center, and Gary Felton, PhD UMD Extension Specialist

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Author: Debra Ricigliano, University of Maryland Extension, Home and Garden Information Center

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