

A Turf Management Calendar for Georgia

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This calendar is a basic guide to turfgrass management in Georgia. The different geographic locations and weather conditions within the state may alter this schedule by as much as four weeks. The schedule can also change within a site because of environmental factors such as moisture, temperature, shade, soil types and conditions, and pest populations. For additional turf management information, contact your county Extension office.

SELECTION: Turfgrass selection is arguably the most important factor in developing and maintaining a high quality, problem-free turf. Selection should be based on the environment, expected turf use, and expected management intensity. Turf "certified" by the Georgia Crop Improvement Association as to varietal purity, freedom from noxious weeds, and documented by the **blue certified tag** should be used.

ESTABLISHMENT: The three phases of establishment are 1) soil preparation, 2) proper planting, and 3) maintenance for two to four weeks after planting. Cool-season grasses are best established in the fall four to six weeks before the first killing frost date. The best time to plant warm-season grasses is during early summer.

MOWING: Proper mowing involves cutting the grass at the recommended height and often enough to prevent scalping. This means removing no more than one third of the total leaf surface in a mowing. So, if a turf is being cut at two inches, mow it when it reaches three inches. Not removing clippings and allowing them to naturally filter down into the turf recycles nutrients, is environmentally sound, saves time, saves energy, and saves landfill space. Generally raising the mowing height during periods of stress helps maintain turf vigor.

IRRIGATION: Turfgrass water needs depend on grass species, turf maintenance level, soil type, and weather. Proper irrigation means waiting to irrigate when the turf shows signs of moisture stress, such as a bluish-gray color. Most turfgrasses require

about one inch of water per week during active growth. Applying this amount of water in one application should soak the soil to a six- to eight- inches deep (two, one-half inch applications are better on sandy soils). The most efficient and effective time to irrigate is after sunset and before sunrise. Irrigating at this time will *not* increase disease problems.

FERTILIZATION: Depend on soil test analysis to determine the best fertilizer grade, rate and time of application. Generally, turfgrasses require one-half to one pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet per month of active growth. Excess nitrogen increases plant growth which means more frequent mowing, increased plant water needs, thatch formation, and possibly insect and disease problems.

	Annual Nitrogen Rate
Turfgrass	(lbs. per 1000 ft ²)
Bermudagrass	3 to 6
Centipedegrass	1 to 2
Seashore Paspalum	
St. Augustinegrass	2 to 5
Zoysiagrass	2 to 4
Tall Fescue	2 to 5

*Clippings do not contribute to thatch under proper management and do not need to be removed. Also, recycling clippings decreases fertilizer needs by 30 percent.

LIMING: Apply lime according to soil test recommendations. Fall is the preferred time of application because winter rainfall helps dissolve the lime into the soil. However, lime can be applied any time and dolomitic lime is generally recommended.

CULTIVATION: Common cultivation practices include coring, spiking and vertical mowing. Coring is the best method to reduce soil compaction and improve water infiltration. Coring is most effective using hollow or spoon-type tines which remove plugs of soil two to three inches deep and one-half to three-fourths inch in diameter. The cores may be removed or broken-up and worked back into the turf by dragging or shattering and thus serving as topdressing. Turf recovery rate can be improved with a fertilizer application 10 to 14 days prior to cultivation.

THATCH CONTROL: If the thatch layer is thicker than one-half inch turf vigor can be reduced. Thatch is most effectively controlled by topdressing with a one-fourth inch layer of topsoil. Thatch can also be reduced by vertical mowing. Vertical mowing should be done when the turf is actively growing and at least 30 days before the "first killing frost date". Vertical mowing should be avoided during periods of temperature and moisture stress, during periods of weed seed germination, or when a preemergence herbicide has been used.

OVERSEEDING: Warm-season turfgrasses can be overseeded with cool-season grasses (ryegrass) to provide year-long green color. This type overseeding is usually done two to four weeks prior to the first fall temperature date of 32°F. The bermudagrasses tolerate overseeding best, while it is difficult to get a uniform overseeding in centipedegrass and zoysiagrass turfs. However, overseeding can be problematic for any turfgrass species,

especially turf already weak from improper management. Common warm-season grass problems associate with overseeded turfs are weak stands due to competition with the overseeding species and delayed spring green-up.

RENOVATION: Turfgrass renovation is needed when a turf declines to the point that normal management and cultural practices are not enough to revive the turf but complete re-establishment is not needed. Generally, if 50 percent or more of the area contains desirable turf, renovation will work. Renovate at the start of the growing season.

PEST CONTROL: Good lawn management can help reduce pest problems. When pest control is needed; (1) identify the pest problem, (2) select the chemical recommended to control the pest, (3) be sure the turfgrass will tolerate the chemical and (4) apply the chemical according to label recommendations. Proper timing of pesticide application is needed for effective and efficient pesticide use.

WEED CONTROL: Preemergence herbicides should be applied before weed emergence. Recommended dates of application for crabgrass and other annual grasses are February 15 to March 5 in South Georgia and March 1 to March 20 in North Georgia. These dates typically correlate to soil temperatures which are below 55EF, the temperature at which crabgrass will germinate. Recommended dates for annual bluegrass and selected winter annual broadleaf weed control are September 1 to September 15 in North Georgia and October 1 to October 15 in South Georgia. Apply postemergence herbicides to small, actively-growing weeds at air temperatures between 60EF.

and 90EF. Applications to turf stressed by high temperature or drought increases the possibility of injury and usually results in poor weed control. Atrazine or simazine can be applied to warm-season turfgrasses for preemergence and/or postemergence control of annual bluegrass and selected winter annual broadleaf weeds from November through February. Avoid all postemergence herbicide applications during spring green-up of warm-season turfgrasses.

DISEASE CONTROL: The development and maintenance of a healthy, vigorous plant through proper turf management is the best method of disease prevention.

Proper fertilization and irrigation are very important disease prevention practices. If a disease is suspected, identification of the disease is needed before treatment can be recommended.

INSECT CONTROL: Very few of the many insects and related species living in turf cause damage. Some insects, such as white grubs and mole crickets, live in the soil and damage turfgrass roots. Others, such as armyworms and chinch bugs, feed on grass leaves and stems by chewing or sucking plant juices. When damage is apparent, an insecticide will probably be needed.

