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Lawns for South Dakota

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Lawns for South Dakota

A good lawn is the basis of beautiful home grounds. Suitable soil, adapted grasses, adequate moisture, proper mowing, regular feeding, and any necessary pest control operations all go into making a good lawn.

SOIL

Soil for lawns should have a fairly high organic content to conserve moisture. Peat, well-rotted manure, and compost are good forms of organic matter. A rich loam is good lawn turf soil. The topsoil should be at least 4 inches deep.

An ideal seedbed can be prepared with various types of equipment, the important accomplishment being a properly graded, firm, but not packed, soil. A seedbed with a gradation of soil particle sizes up to an inch in diameter is ideal for receiving the seed and necessary waterings and also for reducing erosion of the topsoil.

FERTILIZER

Apply fertilizer at the rate of 2 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. Work this into the soil as you prepare the new seedbed.

Fertilizer requirements for choice, established lawns range from 4 to 6 pounds of actual nitrogen per year. This should be applied in not less than two properly timed treatments. Cool-season grasses, as the name implies, make their most vigorous growth in spring and fall. Fertilizer applied in March and August is available to the grass when most needed. Organic fertilizers are recommended for use on the lawn during the summer months when the grass is growing less vigorously.

SEED

Kentucky bluegrass is the best recommendation in most areas of South Dakota. It will require supplemental watering with water of suitable quality during periods of extended droughts. It does not tolerate constant heavy shade.

In sunny and moist areas a seed mixture of 60% Kentucky bluegrass, 30% Creeping Red fescue, and 10% Redtop is suggested. In heavily shaded areas a mixture of 60% Creeping Red fescue, 30% Kentucky bluegrass and 10% Redtop would be superior. Packaged seed mixtures closely equaling these percentages are available, or the individual species can be purchased and mixed at home. About 3 pounds of the seed mixture per 1,000 square feet is sufficient.

In drier areas the Fairway strain of crested wheatgrass is recommended. Alta or Kentucky 31 fescue tolerate considerable drought and shade and can be used to advantage in dry, shady locations. These three bunch grasses, having a larger seed size, will require

FOR SOUTH DAKOTA Lawns

Cooperative Extension Service



up to 8 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet to establish the best turf.

Buffalograss is often satisfactorily used in extremely dry areas. Seed treated to facilitate planting is available. Sow at the rate of 2 pounds per 1,000 square feet. If Buffalograss sod is available, a lawn may be established by planting sod plugs of uniform size in check-rows.

SEEDING AND WATERING

Uniform seed distribution is of the utmost importance. A light raking may be necessary to place a thin soil layer over the seed. Several thorough but gentle applications of water a day may be necessary to keep the seeds moist during the critical 10- to 20-day germination period.

On established lawns the soil should be kept moist throughout at least the top 8 inches. This is best accomplished with periodic soakings rather than frequent light sprinklings.

SODDING

Establishing a new lawn by sodding is generally more expensive than starting a lawn from seed. However, sodding has the advantage of immediate results. In some cases, such as steep slopes, it is often very difficult to establish a lawn by seeding and the use of sod would be very desirable. Soil preparation for sodding is the same as for seeding.

In some localities it is possible to have sod laid by commercial operators. It is also possible to purchase cut sod and haul it and lay it yourself. Sod to be cut should have received good turf grass cultural practices, have a dense growth, and be free of weeds for best results. In order to do a good job of laying the sod, it should be cut with straight sides and have uniform thickness. After the sod has been placed to provide for firm contact of root area with soil, it should be well-watered and rolled.

MOWING

Clip the grass to a height of 1/4 to 2 inches and remove clippings. Mowing actually does not benefit the grass, it merely gives the lawn a neat appearance. The importance of a sharp mower cannot be over-emphasized.

PEST AND WEED CONTROL

Pests of turf grass include insects, rodents, weeds, and diseases.

Many soil insects can be controlled with chlordane. This will often eliminate rodent damage too, such as that caused by moles.

Most annual broad-leaved weeds can be controlled with 2,4-D weed killer. Avoid the use of this material when there is a possibility of it drifting to desirable broad-leaved shrubs and ornamental plants. Several materials are available for the control of annual grassy

weeds. Commercial products are also available that contain insecticides and weedicides, along with fertilizer.

Among the common fungus diseases of lawns are: Brown Patch, Leafspots, Rust, and Snowmold. As is the case with all diseases, prevention is the best recommendation for control. Special and broad-spectrum fungicides are available at most garden supply centers.

Contact your County Extension Agent for the most recent pest control recommendations.

For additional information on pest control, secure "Lawn Diseases and How to Control Them," Home and Garden Bulletin No. 61, USDA, and "Lawn Insects and How to Control Them," Home and Garden Bulletin No. 53, USDA. These bulletins are available at County Extension Service offices.

PRECAUTION: In all cases, when using poisonous pest control materials be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions which appear on the container label. Keep these materials under lock and key or in a safe place away from children or irresponsible persons.