

LAWN MAINTENANCE BASICS

and your partnership with WFL

WFL Turf Services is in a partnership with you, the homeowner, to maintain and keep your lawn looking it's best and staying healthy. Your lawns health falls 50% on the homeowner and 50% falls on WFL. Why? Because we can only treat your lawn for certain issues, but nothing is ever going to get better if the homeowner isn't mowing at the proper height and frequency, watering with the proper amount and at the proper time, and making sure their lawn has adequate drainage so water will not stand in your lawn for long periods of time. We found the following excerpts from an article written by Laurie Trenholm (a professor at the University of Florida's Environmental Horticulture Department in Gainesville) is most helpful in educating on the proper lawn maintenance practices in a way that's easy to understand.

LAWN MAINTENANCE BASICS

Mowing is one of the major cultural practices that will affect the overall health of a lawn. As with irrigation, fertilization, and pest control, it is critical that mowing be done correctly.

EQUIPMENT - Start with the basics by making sure that mowers are in top shape and designed to handle the job for the site. A rotary mower with an easily adjustable deck is optimal for cutting St. Augustinegrass, zoysiagrass, centipede grass, and bahiagrass. A reel mower would only be needed for a hybrid bermudagrass or seashore paspalum lawn. Mulching mowers will cut the grass into very small pieces, leaving clipping that can be readily decomposed, providing nutrients and organic matter back to the lawn. Leaving clipping on the lawn does not contribute to thatch buildup and can be beneficial.

As with any equipment, preventative maintenance on mowers will ensure better and longer wear at lower costs and will result in the best cutting job. Be sure that mower blades are sharpened on a regular basis. A dull blade not only leaves the lawn looking ragged (it actually rips the tips of the leaf blades), but can also result in increased insect or disease pressure, as insects and disease can more easily invade a ripped leaf blade. String trimmers [or "weed eaters" that use a plastic cord] are not intended for cutting grass and are not good for the health or appearance of the grass. Do not cut lawn areas with a string trimmer and watch out for tree trunks.

HEIGHT OF CUT - Mowing at lower heights reduces the grass's overall stress tolerance and reduces the depth of the root system. In response to low mowing, the grass uses up stored energy reserves (stored as carbohydrates) to regenerate shoot growth at the expense of root growth. This makes grass more susceptible to drought or other types of stress and reduces its ability to regrow out of any type of stress. Mowing too low is one of the most common cultural mistakes made on lawns. It is easy to correct and will greatly improve the health of the grass. See the grass height chart to the top right.

SPECIES	OPTIMAL HEIGHT OF CUT
Bahiagrass	3 - 4"
Bermudagrass	$\frac{3}{4}$ - 2" (varies w/ cultivar)
Centipedegrass	1.5 - 2"
St. Augustinegrass (dwarf)	2 - 2.5"
St. Augustinegrass (standard)	3.5 - 4"
Zoysiagrass	2 - 2.5"

Never remove more than one-third of a grass's leaf blades while mowing in order to reduce stress on the grass. If you miss a mowing due to schedules or weather, raise the height of cut when you next mow. Any time a lawn is under stress, whether from drought, shade, poor soil, insects, disease, etc., raise the mowing height to the next level to help the grass survive.

Scalping the grass (removing an excess of shoot tissue) does not make the lawn look good nor does it contribute to lawn health. Repeated scalping will wear down the carbohydrate reserves and stress tolerance of the grass and may increase disease problems. Over time, this can lead to general decline and weakening of the turf. In St. Augustinegrass and centipede grass, the damage can be more extensive, as scalping may result in removal of many of the "growing points" that produce new growth on the above ground stolons. Remember that these two grasses do not have underground growing points, so scalping may actually kill the portions of the lawn that allow for it to grow.

MOWING FREQUENCY - How often lawns must be mowed is determined by the time of year, geographical location in the state, season, management level, and species. In north Florida, where grasses go into dormancy in the winter, there is usually no need to mow during those months. Some grasses, such as St. Augustinegrass, grow prolifically and need more frequent mowing than centipede grass, for example, which grows in a fairly prostrate manner. In the long days of summer, [your lawn should be mowed weekly and only bi-weekly if absolutely necessary.]

IRRIGATION - Irrigation is one of the most important cultural practices that we do for our lawns alongside regular maintenance. Since water is a limited resource and is vital to the health of your lawn, it is very important that watering be done correctly. There are some critical components to understand how to irrigate correctly. For more information on effectively and properly watering your lawn please visit the following page: <https://www.wflturf.com/irrigation> or scan the QR code below!

OTHER RESOURCES

Visit WFL's website at www.WFLturf.com



WFL TURF SERVICES, INC.