

# Lawn care tips for home owners

Your lawn will be the envy of the neighborhood with a little sensible and relatively easy management, says Horticulturist Jack Eggers, at the University of Guelph's horticultural science department.

First, avoid mowing your lawn too short because this causes the root system to starve and become very shallow. Clip no shorter than three centimetres to four centimetres (1.2 inches to 1.5 inches) in height.

For example, at a five cm (2 in.) mowing height, Kentucky Bluegrass roots will normally be 25 cm to 30 cm deep (10 in. to 12 in.); but they will be eight cm to 10 cm deep (three in. to four in.) at a two cm (0.78 in.) mowing height.

Mow the lawn weekly during rapid growth and return clippings to the lawn to mulch.

Turfgrasses are adequately fertilized when their nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium needs are supplied in a 4-1-2 ratio.

An established lawn should receive 1.5 kilograms to 2.0 kilograms of actual nitrogen per 100 square metres (three pounds to four pounds per 1,000 square feet) per growing season. This is supplied by applying eight kg to 10 kg (16 lbs to 20 lbs) of a 20-5-10 fertilizer or nine kg to 12 kg (18 lbs to 24 lbs) of a 16-4-8 fertilizer in early April, mid-June and early September.

Expensive turf fertilizers contain nitrogen in a slow release form to prevent foliar burn.

But inexpensive or "bargain" fertilizers such as 7-7-7 can be successfully used if applied at a rate no higher than 14 kg of fertilizer per 100 square metres (28 lbs. per 1,000 square feet) per application and watered into the soil immediately after application, he says.

A well-maintained lawn needs supplemental irrigation only during the June to August period and then only at seven to 10 day intervals.

Apply about two cm (0.78 in.) water per application. Avoid light frequent sprinklings, particularly in the evening, because this encourages weeds and increases the turfgrass's susceptibility to fungal diseases.

For broadleaf weed control try one of several safe and effective herbicides available at garden centres or hardware stores.

Most products contain two or three herbicides together to kill all of the broadleaf weeds. Proper application requires that the weed is growing actively for rapid uptake of the herbicide.

The period late May through June and September is the best time to spray but good weed kill without turf injury can be obtained at other times if the temperature is not above 25 degrees Celsius (77 degrees Fahrenheit).

Annual grass weeds such as crabgrass and annual bluegrass are best controlled with a pre-emergence herbicide applied in late April, he says.

This may be applied as a spray or in granular form or applied as a fertilizer-herbicide combination with the first fertilizer application in the spring.

## Sprout Spuds

To plant potatoes this May, simply cut a large potato in half, allow the surface to dry and then plant 10 centimetres (four inches) deep. Sprouts will develop within a week in warm fertile soil. Allow the tops to die off and then dig up the tubers and store in a cool, dry place.

## Do It Now

Don't wait for frost-free weather to start your flower garden. Many bedding plants, such as sweet alyssum, pansies, snapdragons, calendulas thrive in cooler temperatures.

Perennial grass weeds are difficult to control because there are no available herbicides which will selectively remove perennial grass weeds from a home lawn.

Send the weed to the University of Guelph for identification and directions on the correct control procedure.

The hairy chinch bug can damage lawns during July and August. Early symptoms are often mistaken for drought stress. Apply an insecticide in mid-July and again in early August, if necessary, to control this pest.

Thick layers of dead turf above the soil surface, or thatch, is sometimes a problem on lawns four to six years old. Thatch development is caused by poor soil aeration and excessive turf growth.

Reduce the amount of nitrogen and water supplied and if necessary, physically remove the dead turf in September using a vertical mower.



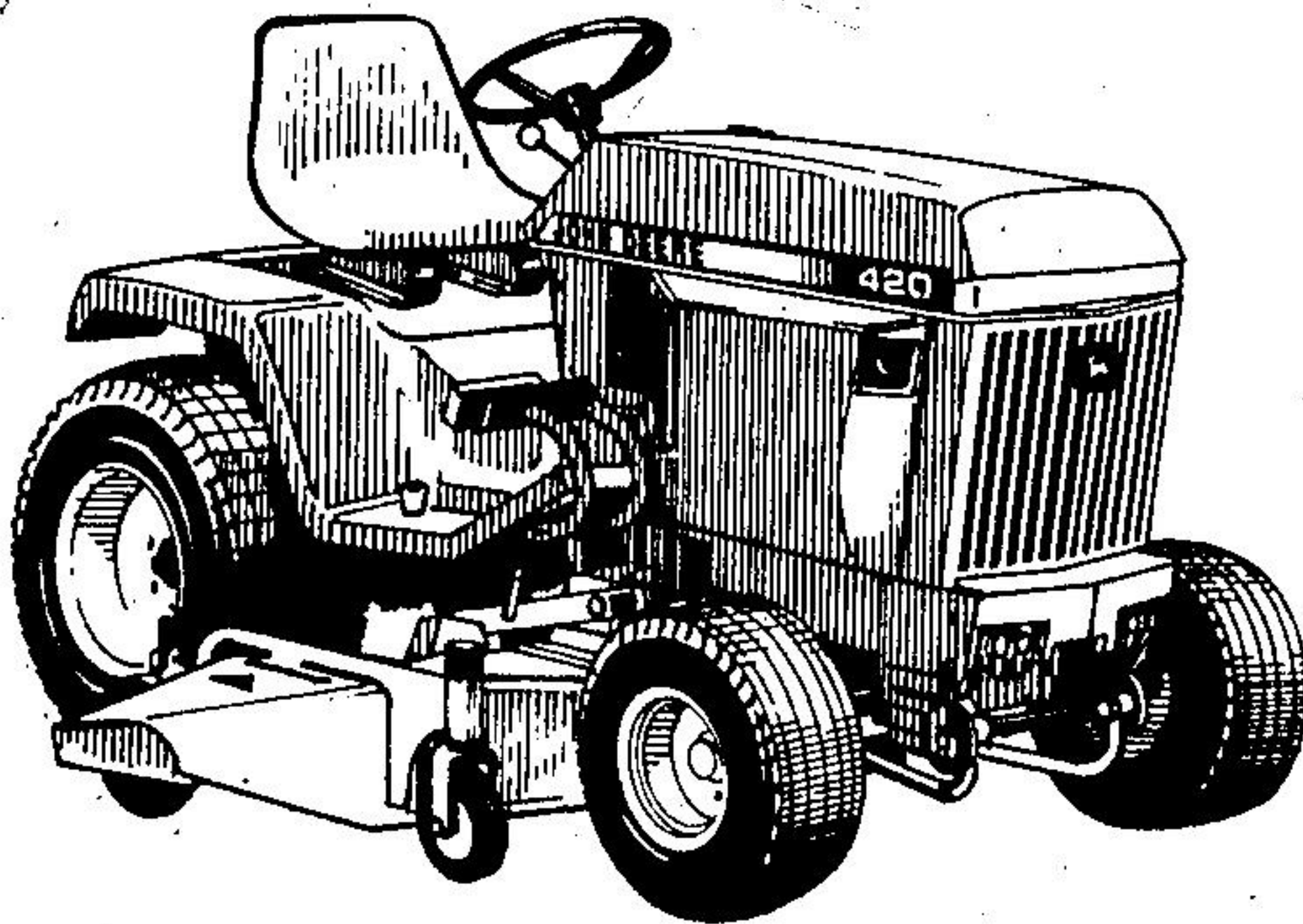
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## Pinch Back

Pinch back the blooms in geraniums and coleus, says Tony Hogevoorst, rural organizations co-ordinator (Horticulture)

with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's rural organizations and services branch. Your plants will then branch out and the foliage will double its size within a few weeks.

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