

Spring LAWN & GARDEN

Simple plan for a lush lawn

Whether you're starting a new lawn or reviving an existing one, approach grass the way you would any other plant. A lawn is made up of as many as 850 grass plants per square foot. Grasses might look more or less the same, but different types have different levels of insect and disease resistance; tolerance for drought, shade, and foot traffic; and temperature hardiness.

Lawns usually contain combinations of grass types. Picking the right mixture for the conditions in your yard is essential. Just as a plant that thrives in dry soil will probably die in a boggy spot, an out-of-place grass will grow poorly or not at all.

After you've picked an appropriate grass, consider how to plant it. As with other annuals and perennials, you can start grass from seed or put live plants in the ground. With grass, that means sod. Sod is the quickest, easiest way to start a new lawn — but usually the most expensive. Sod yields a usable lawn in a few weeks.

Whether you sod or seed, your soil must be grass-friendly: deep, friable (crumbly), fertile, and well-draining. If your soil is seriously lacking in any of these requirements, fix the problems first. Build up shallow soil

with a few inches of weed-free topsoil. Improve friability and fertility by working in compost, manure, or other organic matter. Solve drainage problems by changing the grade of your yard or installing a subsurface drainage system.

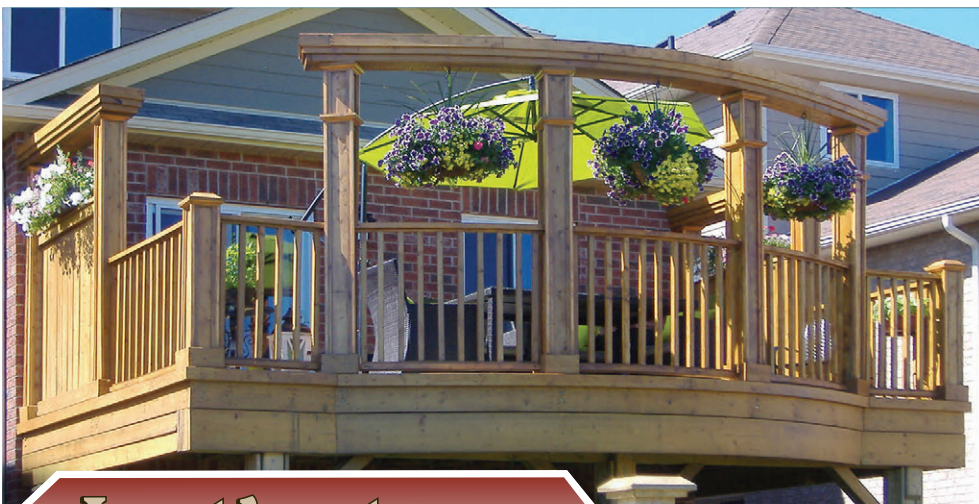
Lawns love water, but beware of overwatering them. New lawns require more water than established ones, but too much is hazardous to any lawn's health. Overwatering keeps the top layer of soil wet, encouraging grass to develop weak, shallow roots — the kind that lead to quick injury in hot, dry weather. Infrequent but deep watering provides the best results.

Lawns need to be fed, as well as watered, but overfertilizing can be as harmful as overwatering. The type of fertilizer you choose and when to apply it depend on the type of grass. Most commercial fertilizers are a combination of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Of these ingredients, the most important for grass is nitrogen, which promotes leaf growth and good color. You already have an excellent source of nitrogen — grass clippings. Leaving clippings on the lawn is a cheap, easy way to fertilize.



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