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How to make a small lawn nice

If you have a small yard, you know you don't have to spend a lot of time maintaining it. However, chances are you're more devoted to detailing every inch of that property than those with much larger spreads. It's not the total effort that counts — its the effort per square foot.

One thing's for sure, some of the most beautiful properties you will ever see are a quarter acre or less in size. Some things never change, though. The keys to success for small yards are the same as those for properties as big as golf courses: proper mowing, watering and fertilizing.

Mowing

Here is one chore where small yard owners have it made. With a small lawn you can use almost anything from an old fashioned push mower to a high-tech electric mower that floats on a bed of air.

Small lawns have lots of stops and starts and more than their share of tight corners. Often the best way to cut grass in tight spots is with a hand-held grass shear.

On uneven ground, special care must be taken to avoid cutting the grass too low. Generally, you're better off keeping your grass on the longer side to encourage deeper rooting and thus better drought tolerance.

Additional reminders about mowing: don't cut the grass when it's wet, because the mower tears the grass; leave the clippings on for free mulch and to save on fertilizer; alternate the

direction of the cut each week to avoid putting ruts in your lawn from the wheels on the mower.

Watering

Many homeowners with small yards enjoy watering their lawns by hand. That's okay as long as you water deeply. Deep watering encourages the grass roots to grow more deeply in search of that water. That gives you a tougher, stronger lawn.

Water early or late in the day to reduce water loss due to evaporation. During the summer, you may not be able to water due to drought restrictions. Don't worry. The high heat and lack of water will signal the grass to automatically go dormant and stop growing. Though it will turn brown, the lawn will revive itself when the weather cools and the rains return in the fall.

During droughts, avoid fertilizing your lawn. This stimulates the grass to grow and increases its need for water.

Fertilizing

Using a traditional lawn food spreader within the confines of a small yard can be tricky. The extra maneuvering required to navigate tight corners can result in uneven application of fertilizer, which results in very noticeable burn spots or uneven growth. An excellent alternative is a "spray-on" water-soluble fertilizer.

The best time to feed grass is during the cooler spring and fall seasons, when the grass is most actively growing. Try to avoid feedings before a heavy rain.

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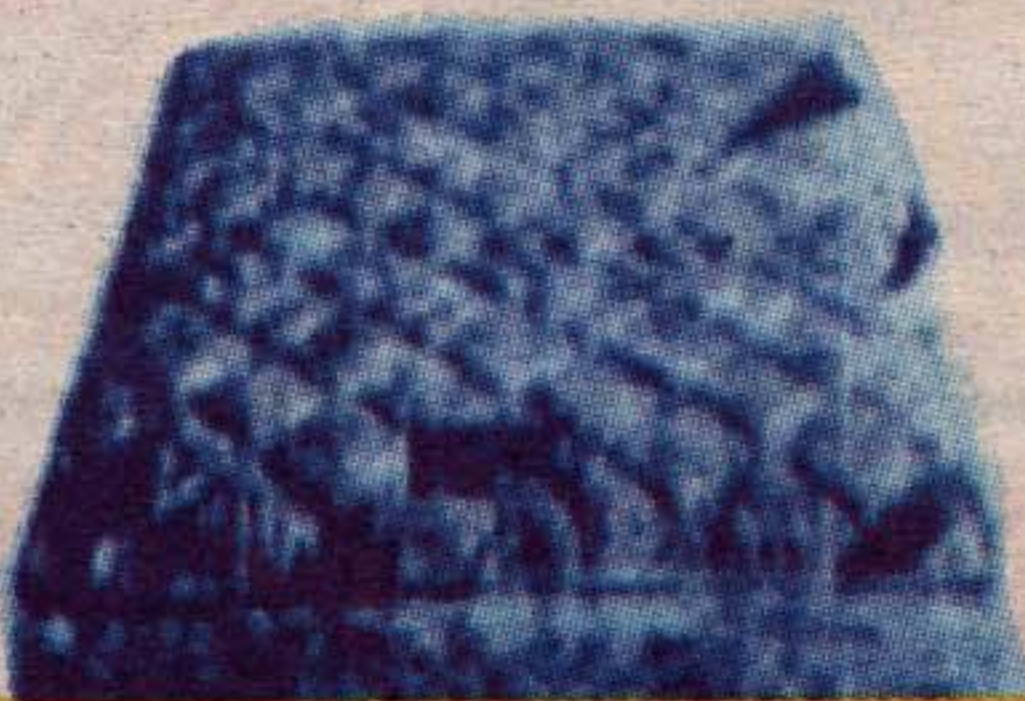


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