

## LawnCare: A Customized Approach



### Quick Facts

- The three most beneficial times to fertilize are late spring, late summer and fall. Applying fertilizer at other times during the year can cause unnecessary stress to your lawn.
- Indiscriminate spraying of herbicides can cause damage to your trees and shrubs, and doesn't address the site conditions which cause weeds to appear.
- Aeration helps reduce soil compaction, aids in the break down of thatch, and resolves most soil conditions which encourage weeds.
- Over-seeding your lawn introduces new grass varieties, many of which are disease resistant and more drought tolerant. It also helps thicken your lawn, giving weeds less room to grow.
- More than any other maintenance practices, proper watering and mowing improve a lawn's vigor and appearance.

No two lawns are the same. That is why we have developed a lawn care program that considers the specific conditions of your lawn as well as your expectations for your lawn's appearance. Before devising a plan, our knowledgeable consultants meet with you to help us determine what of our many services will work well for you and your grass. Each program is tailor made just for your lawn.

We aim to exceed your expectations while remaining responsible stewards of the environment. We utilize our understanding of the grass lifecycle to accurately time and dose fertilizer and herbicide applications. Through this understanding we are able to minimize the use of fertilizers and herbicides while enhancing the health and beauty of your lawn.

### Addiction

The common lawn care approach will alter your lawn—**making it chemically dependant**. Constant applications of fertilizer, herbicide and water will make your lawn look nice, but calling a halt to these methods will show that your lawn is no longer able to survive without its high maintenance program. We can wean your lawn off of these environmentally unsound practices with a maintenance plan that will give you a beautiful, low input, environmentally responsible lawn.

### Fertilizer: Friend or Foe?

Most, if not all, grasses growing in Twin Cities lawns grow best in temperatures between 60° and 75°. These cool season grasses will actually go into a period of dormancy through July and into August to survive the high temperatures and drought of summer. Applying fertilizer during this time forces grass to grow, expending valuable energy reserves and weakening the grass. Fertilizing in the early spring is also stressful to your grass, and can encourage weed growth. The most beneficial times to fertilize are in the late spring, late summer and fall.

Timing is not the only factor which is important. The type of fertilizer you apply makes a great deal of difference to the health of your yard. The two main types of fertilizer are natural organic-based and refined elements. Both contain the major nutrients needed to grow plants (nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, or N-P-K), but only the organic-based fertilizer provides other elements and nutrients outside of these big three. Additionally, natural organic-based fertilizers provide organic material which is essential to a healthy soil ecosystem. Refined element fertilizers are a viable alternative to organic-based when used in conjunction with proper maintenance practices.



## Weed Control: Fact and Fiction

Weeds are not indiscriminate vagabonds that appear in a lawn in order to vex homeowners. The appearance of excessive weeds is an indicator of deeper problems within your lawn.

Most lawn companies rely entirely on broadleaf herbicides for weed control. This is effective only on the surface, as it fails to address the underlying conditions which encourage weed growth. Additionally, the broadleaf herbicide used by many companies contains the active ingredient Dicamba. This chemical leaches through the soil to attack not only your dandelions, but your trees and shrubs as well.

Limited use of broadleaf herbicides which do **not** contain Dicamba are acceptable in most lawns, as long as they are not the primary means of weed control. Your lawn care plan will contain an integrated pest management program which generally includes aeration and seeding, tips on mowing and watering, and a recommendation for spot spraying the few weeds which may still appear from time to time.

The only way to maintain a 100% weed free lawn is through multiple indiscriminate applications of herbicide every year. However, a well managed, vigorous, healthy lawn will keep weeds out on its own. Our aim is 90-95% weed free.

## Aeration and Seeding

Compacted soil is a major factor contributing to weeds. Weeds are opportunistic, thriving where grass is thin or unable to grow. In many cases aeration tips the balance in favor of your grass.

In addition to alleviating soil compaction, aeration can help encourage root growth, aid your lawn in the break-down of thatch, and help create a healthy thriving ecosystem in your yard.

Seeding goes hand in hand with aeration. When seeding is completed in conjunction with aeration new varieties of grass are introduced into your lawn. These grass types are often more vital, disease resistant and drought tolerant than previously developed varieties. This will also help fill in bare spots more quickly, and result in thicker healthier grass.

## The Truth About Watering

Proper watering encourages deep and extensive root systems, while poor watering practices encourage shallow root systems and a high maintenance lawn. When water is applied frequently in small doses shallow root systems develop, making your lawn less drought tolerant, and more prone to disease and other stresses. Over watering also increases the thatch layer and encourages moisture loving weeds.

As a general rule it is best to water infrequently and deeply. In most cases 1 to 1 1/2 inches of water applied at one time will soak your soil to a depth of 6 to 10 inches. Ask your Rainbow LawnCare consultant to make recommendations for your lawn and soil type.

## Mowing the Right Way

Mowing height directly influences the depth of a root system. When grass is mown too short, it encourages shallow root systems and all the problems that go with them. A mowing height of 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches will encourage a deep healthy root system. Optimal mowing height does vary between grass varieties. Ask your Rainbow consultant what is the right height for your lawn.

When mowing do not take more than 1/3 of the leaf blade. Grasses are plants, and thusly make their own food through photosynthesis. When too much of the plant is removed, your grass will expend its energy trying to replace the photosynthetic area instead of focusing on root growth. If your lawn has gone too long, try mowing several times with a space of a day or two in between.

Mowing is a brutal action. If mower blades are not sharp, grass blades are bruised and torn instead of cleanly cut. This is an added stress on your grass, and can frequently lead to browning around the frayed edges. Damage can be minimized by always using a sharpened blade. If you don't know how to sharpen your mower blade, check your owner's manual or contact the manufacturing company.

## Questions?

Don't hesitate to [contact us](#) with any of your lawn care questions!

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