



PURDUE

TURFGRASS
SCIENCE
PROGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF AGRONOMY

Maintaining Lawns on Sandy Soils

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Species Selection

Maintaining an attractive lawn on sandy soils depends largely on the turfgrass species selected. Species that have improved drought tolerance include tall fescue and some cultivars of Kentucky bluegrass. Fine leaf fescues include red, sheep, hard, and chewing fescues and these grasses perform well under droughty conditions, especially in partial shade. However, these grasses are very fine bladed and work best in a mix with Kentucky bluegrass.

Mowing

To encourage deep rooting, it is imperative to mow turfgrasses on sandy soils at a minimum of 2.5" and preferably 3.0 - 3.5".

Irrigation

Irrigation on sandy soil needs to be more frequent and in smaller amounts than on heavier soils. Irrigate to thoroughly wet the rootzone and then do not water again until the turf shows the first sign of drought stress which is bluish-grey color of the leaves. Depending on the soil and weather, irrigation may be needed as often as daily or as infrequently as once every week or two.

Fertilization

Lawns on sandy soils need more frequent fertilizer applications but in smaller amounts than lawns on heavier soils. It is important to use slow release forms of nitrogen to reduce chances of nitrogen movement through the soil profile. Slow release forms of N include sulfur or polymer coated urea, natural organic N, and methylene ureas. Following is a table of recommended fertilization programs and applications are listed in order of importance (Sept. application is most important).

Table 1. Fertilization programs for Kentucky bluegrass on lawns on sandy soils and heavy soils.

Date	Sandy Soils			Heavy Soils		
	Maximum	Standard	Minimum	Maximum	Standard	Minimum
	-----lbs N/1000 ft ² -----			-----lbs N/1000 ft ² -----		
Sept.	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.0	1.0	1.0
Oct. 1-15	0.75	0.75	0.75			
Nov. 1-15	1.0*	1.0*		1.0-1.5*	1.0*	
May 15-30	0.75	0.75		0.75-1.0	0.75-1.0	
June 15-30	0.75					
July 15-30	0.75			0.75		

Fertilizers containing 50% or more slow release N should be used except where marked (*) when fast release N can be used. Tall fescue lawns can be maintained with less fertilizer and follow the standard or minimum program.

Pest Control

Since lawns on sandy soils tend to be drier than those on heavier soils, pest problems are minimized. Pest problems can be further minimized by proper mowing, fertilization, and irrigation. If pest problems occur and the decision is made to apply a pesticide, follow label directions closely. Though research has shown that when pesticides are applied properly to turf areas, very little horizontal or vertical movement occurs. However, the risk of pesticide movement increase on sandy soils and thus use extreme care when applying any pesticide to turf areas.

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