

## FESCUE CALENDAR

These suggested management practices will help you care for your lawn throughout the year.

Location, terrain, soil type and condition, age of lawn, previous lawn care, and other factors affect turf performance, so adjust the following management practices and dates to suit your particular lawn.

### MARCH – MAY

**MOWING:** Mow to 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches. Mow often enough so that no more than one-third of the grass height is cut; this may be every 5 to 7 days in late spring. Leave grass clippings on the lawn where they decompose quickly and can provide up to 25 percent of the lawn's fertilizer needs. If prolonged rain or other factors prevent mowing and clippings are too plentiful to leave on the lawn, collect them and use them as mulch. DO NOT bag them for trash collection; grass clippings do not belong in landfills.

**FERTILIZATION:** DO NOT fertilize tall fescue after March 15.

**WATERING:** Tall fescue needs 1 to 1 1/4 inches of water every week, ideally NOT all at once. A dark bluish-gray color and wilted, folded, or curled leaves indicate that it is time to water. Water until the soil is wet to a depth of 4 to 6 inches. Use a screwdriver or similar implement to check. Sandy soils require more frequent watering (about 1/2 inch of water every third day). Because clay soils accept water slowly, irrigate just until runoff occurs, wait until the water has been absorbed, and begin watering again. Continue until the desired depth or amount is applied. Proper irrigation may prevent or reduce problems later in the summer. Watering between 2 and 8 a.m. decreases the incidence of certain diseases.

**WEED CONTROL:** Apply preemergence herbicides to control crabgrass, goosegrass, and foxtail. Apply by the time dogwoods are in bloom. (See Pest Control Recommendations for Turfgrass Managers, AG-408).

**INSECT CONTROL:** Check for and control white grubs in April and May. (See White Grub Control in Turf, AG-366).

**AERATION:** Delay aeration until fall.

**THATCH REMOVAL:** It is generally not necessary to remove thatch.

### JUNE – AUGUST

**MOWING:** Mow to 3 1/2 inches and mow before the grass gets taller than 5 inches.

**FERTILIZATION:** DO NOT fertilize tall fescue at this time.

**WATERING:** Either water as needed to prevent drought stress or allow the lawn to go dormant. Dormant lawns must be watered once every 3 weeks during a drought.

**DISEASE CONTROL:** Tall fescue is highly susceptible to brown (large) patch disease, which appears as irregularly shaped patches of dead or dying turf. Brown patch likes high humidity and temperatures above 85°F. It becomes extremely severe during prolonged, overcast wet weather with evening air temperatures above 68°F. and daytime temperatures in the mid- to upper 80s. Do not apply nitrogen fertilizer when the disease is active, keep the mowing height above 3 inches, and water between 2 and 8 a.m. Apply fungicide during severe brown patch outbreaks. (See Diseases of Cool-Season Grasses, AG-361.)

**WEED CONTROL:** DO NOT use herbicides at this time.

**INSECT CONTROL:** Check for and control white grubs in July and August.

**AERATION:** DO NOT aerate tall fescue lawns at this time.

**RENOVATION:** Western region only! Overseed thin, bare areas as weather cools (August 15 to September 1). Use a blend of "turf-type" tall fescue cultivars at 6 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet, and apply a starter-type (high phosphorous) fertilizer. Keep the seedbed moist with light watering several times per day. Do not let the seedlings dry out.

## SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER

**MOWING:** Mow to 2 1/2 to 3 inches in height.

**FERTILIZATION:** Have your soil tested. Ask your county Extension agent about a free soil test. Then apply the nutrient your lawn needs. If you don't test, apply a complete nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (N-P-K) turf-grade fertilizer with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio (that is, 12-4-8 or 16-4-8). Fertilize with 1 pound of actual nitrogen (N) per 1,000 square feet in mid-September and again in November (about the time the grass is green but not actively growing). You need to apply 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, so how much fertilizer do you need to buy? Divide 100 by the FIRST number of the fertilizer bag. (The first number always represents nitrogen content.) For example, if you've got a 10-10-10 fertilizer, divide 100 by 10 and you get 10. That means you need to buy 10 pounds of fertilizer for every 1,000 square feet of lawn.

**WATERING:** Water following guidelines for March through May.

**WEED CONTROL:** Apply broadleaf herbicides to control broadleaf weeds like chickweed, henbit, and other weeds as necessary. Caution: Some herbicides may affect newly seeded turf. Follow label directions. (See Pest Control Recommendations for Turfgrass Managers, AG-408.)

**INSECT CONTROL:** Check for white grubs in September and October; fall is the ideal time to control white grubs. (See White Grub Control in Turf, AG-366.)

**AERATION:** Aerate lawns that are subject to heavy traffic or on clay soils. Remove plugs and break them up to put the soil back into the lawn.

**RENOVATION:** Piedmont and coastal plain regions only! Overseed thin, bare areas as weather cools (August 15 to September 1). Use a blend of "turf-type" tall fescue cultivars at 6 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet, and apply a starter-type (high phosphorus) fertilizer. Keep the seedbed moist with light watering several times per day. Do not let the seedlings dry out.

## DECEMBER - FEBRUARY

**MOWING:** Mow to 3 inches and remove leaves and other debris.

**FERTILIZATION:** Fertilize with 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in February.

**WATERING:** Water following guidelines for March through May.

**WEED CONTROL:** Apply broadleaf herbicides as necessary for control of chickweed, henbit, or other weeds.

**DISCLAIMER:** Recommendations for the use of agricultural chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service agent.

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