

A Few Steps To Establishing A Healthy Lawn

Develop a healthy soil. Contact your N.C. Cooperative Extension Service for information on soil testing. This is free service in North Carolina. Without modifying the soil, you will have bare ground, native plants, weeds, or a combination of all three.

Set realistic goals.

Choose a grass species or mixture adapted to your location. Warm season grasses adapted for southeastern North Carolina include centipede-grass, carpetgrass, bermudagrass, St. Augustinegrass, zoysiagrass, and bahiagrass.

Choose a lawn management scheme consistent with your lifestyle. If you have the time and money to culture a fine lawn, then choose a grass that will perform up to your expectations (hybrid bermudagrass or zoysiagrass). If you like other leisure-time activities, Choose a grass that requires less maintenance (St. Augustinegrass, centipede-grass, carpetgrass, bahiagrass,

or common bermudagrass).

Plan a fertilization and mowing program based upon N.C. Cooperative Extension recommendations—and stick to it. Request a copy of "Carolina Lawns - AG69" from your local N.C. Cooperative Extension agent.

Use slow-release forms of nitrogen fertilizer. Use other fertilizer nutrients only in the proportions needed for grass growth. Most warm season grasses do best with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium fertilizer ratio. Fertilizers like 16-4-8, 15-5-10, or 12-4-8 are ideal for all warm-season grasses except centipede-grass.

Use IPM, or Integrated Pest Management, strategies and practice grasscycling. Controlling insects or diseases often requires that you learn the proper time and method for treating pests. This will require some effort and tolerance on your part. Grasscycle—leave grass clippings on your lawn or

compost them.

Do not try to grow lawn-grass where lawngrasses do not grow. Most lawngrasses do poorly in heavy shade, water-inundated soils, very acid soils, heavy foot-traffic, or on the beach. Choose appropriate groundcovers, ornamental grasses, or landscape materials for difficult-to-maintain areas.

Provide adequate water.

Learn everything you can about all the plants in your yard, including your lawn-grass.

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