

# St. Augustinegrass Lawn Maintenance Calendar

NC STATE EXTENSION

## Lawn Maintenance Calendars

*These suggested management practices will help you care for your St. Augustinegrass lawn throughout the year. Since location, terrain, soil type and condition, age of lawn, previous lawn care, and other factors affect turf performance, adjust these practices and dates to suit your home lawn.*

## March Through May

### Mowing

Before greenup, remove dormant grass leaves by mowing to 2½ inches with a rotary mower that has a newly sharpened blade. Maintain the lawn at 2½ inches, mowing before it gets to 4 inches. Leave clippings on the lawn.

### Fertilization

Apply ½ pound of nitrogen (N) per 1,000 square feet in May or 2 weeks after greenup, whichever is last. Use a complete (N-P-K) turf-grade fertilizer with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio (12-4-8 or 16-4-8). Yellow appearance may indicate an iron deficiency. Spray iron (ferrous) sulfate (2 ounces in water per 1,000 square feet) or a chelated iron source to enhance color as needed. Submit a soil sample to determine nutrient requirements, if you haven't already. Contact your county Extension agent for details. Apply lime if the soil-test report suggests it.

### Watering

Actively growing St. Augustinegrass requires about 1 inch of water per week, all at once, if possible. If you don't get enough rain, you will have to water. Sandy soils often require more frequent watering (½ inch every third day). Proper irrigation may prevent or reduce pest and other problems.

### Weed Control

If crabgrass and goosegrass have been a problem, apply preemergence herbicides by the time dogwoods are in full bloom. Control broadleaf weeds as necessary with postemergence herbicides. St. Augustinegrass is sensitive to certain herbicides (2,4-D and MSMA), so follow label directions and use caution.

### Insect Control

Control any white grubs. If drought symptoms or yellow spots occur in a sunny location, check for chinch bug activity. Push a coffee can (with both top and bottom removed) into the ground and fill it

with water. Any chinch bugs present will float. Treat for chinch bugs if you have 20 or more chinch bugs per 1,000 square feet (see *White Grub Control in Turf*, AG-366, and *Insect Management in Turf*, AG-447, for more information).

### **Disease Control**

If circular patches of brown grass up to several feet in diameter appear, you may have brown (large) patch. Gray leaf spot also may be a problem. Control both diseases as necessary with proper fungicides (see *Turfgrass Pest Management Manual*, AG-348, for more information).

### **Aerate**

Heavy clay soils or heavily trafficked sections of lawn may benefit from aeration. If it is needed, aerate in late spring or early summer when the grass is actively growing and capable of recovery.

### **Renovation**

Replant large bare areas in May (or when daytime temperatures are continually above 60°F) using plugs planted on 12-inch centers or sprigs space-planted at the rate of 1½ bushels per 1,000 square feet. One square yard of turf pulled apart is equivalent to 1 bushel of sprigs.

## **June Through August**

### **Mowing**

Same as March through May guidelines.

### **Fertilization**

Apply ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in June and August and 1 pound of nitrogen in July. In the absence of a soil test, use a complete (N-P-K) fertilizer with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio.

### **Watering**

Same as March through May guidelines.

### **Thatch**

If thatch was ¾ inches thick last summer, mow grass to 2½ inches and use a power rake with 3-inch blade spacing.

### **Weed Control**

Apply postemergence herbicides to control summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds, such as knotweed, spurge, and lespedeza. Since St. Augustinegrass is sensitive to certain herbicides (2,4-D and MSMA), follow label directions and use with caution. Do not apply herbicides unless weeds are actively growing and the lawn is not under drought stress. If crabgrass and goosegrass are present, make a note to apply a preemergence herbicide next spring.

### **Insect Control**

If drought symptoms or yellow spots occur in a sunny location, check for chinch bug activity. Push a coffee can (with both top and bottom removed) into the ground and fill it with water. Any chinch bugs

present will float. Treat for chinch bugs if you have 20 or more chinch bugs per 1,000 square feet (see *Insect Management in Turf*, AG-447, for more information.)

### **Disease Control**

Check for gray leaf spot and brown (large) patch. See *Diseases of Warm Season Grasses*, AG-360.

## **September Through November**

### **Mowing**

Same as March through May guidelines.

### **Fertilization**

DO NOT fertilize St. Augustinegrass after August 31.

### **Watering**

Water to prevent drought stress while the grass is actively growing and after the lawn goes dormant to prevent excessive dehydration.

### **Insect Control**

Follow June through August guidelines.

### **Thatch**

Check for thatch layer in early September. If the thatch layer is  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches thick, plan to dethatch in the spring.

### **Weed Control**

If crabgrass and goosegrass are present, plan to apply a preemergence herbicide next spring.

### **Disease Control**

Check for brown (large) patch. See *Diseases of Warm Season Grasses*, AG-360, for more information.

## **December Through February**

### **Mowing**

Pick up debris (rocks, sticks, leaves, etc.) from lawn. Do not try to remove excess debris by burning. This could injure the lawn and is a fire hazard.

### **Fertilization**

Do not apply fertilizer or lime.

### **Watering**

Although the lawn will be dormant, water occasionally to prevent excessive dehydration.

## Weed Control

Apply broadleaf herbicides to control chickweed, henbit, etc. St. Augustinegrass is sensitive to certain postemergence herbicides like 2,4-D and MSMA, so follow label directions for reducing rates, and use with caution. Selected herbicides like atrazine and simazine can be applied in November or December to control annual bluegrass and several winter annual broadleaf weeds. Read the label and follow directions carefully.

## More About St. Augustinegrass

This fast growing grass has a medium to dark green color and very coarse leaf texture. With proper maintenance, it provides a dense, lush lawn. A warm-season grass, it's best in warm, humid areas not exposed to excessive or intense periods of cold weather. The Raleigh variety has the best cold tolerance and is best suited for the eastern piedmont and coastal plains.

St. Augustinegrass can only be planted vegetatively. It grows best in fertile, well-drained soils. It has excellent tolerance to shade and good salt, heat, and, to a moderate extent, drought tolerance. It does not tolerate heavy traffic or cold weather.

Since it is fast growing, St. Augustinegrass needs to be mowed frequently. It should never receive more than 4 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in a year. With high fertilization rates and irrigation, thatch buildup may be a problem. Thatch can lead to other problems, such as disease and insect damage. Chinch bugs are often a problem, causing leaves to wilt and turn brown. Yellow spots are often associated with chinch bug activity. In addition, brown (large) patch can create brown circular patches up to several feet in diameter that usually warrant treatment.

St. Augustinegrass is sensitive to some postemergence herbicides, such as 2,4-D and MSMA; however, some herbicides can be used at lower rates. Read and follow label directions carefully. Following the management practices in this factsheet is the best means of preventing and controlling problems in your St. Augustinegrass lawn. Continual loss of grass may mean that you need to select a different turfgrass species, one that is better adapted to your particular yard. Contact your county Extension agent for help in identifying and solving turfgrass problems.