



Lawn 101

By Mark Peterson, SAWS Conservation Project Coordinator

Follow these straightforward tips and you should have a healthy green lawn that uses minimal water.

1. Select the correct grass type

Abandon the idea that you can have any grass species you want. The amount of sunlight determines your species. Ten hours or more of direct sunlight dictates Bermuda grass. Less than ten hours and you're limited to zoysia and St. Augustine. If you have less than five hours of direct sunlight, then forget about a lawn. It's not going to happen.

2. Mow weekly

Select at least one day a week as your mowing day and stick to it. Mowing weekly improves grass health and reduces weeds. Also, always mow high — 3 inches for St. Augustine, 2 inches for zoysia and 1 ½ inches for Bermuda grass.

3. Compost and aerate

This is the second most important activity you can do for your lawn. Of the two, composting is the most important and should be done twice a year. Aeration can be done once or even every other year. Both increase the soil's ability to absorb water and oxygen, each crucial for strong root

development. Strong roots means less need for nutrients and water.

4. Leave the clippings on the lawn

Grass is a “heavy feeder,” meaning it requires more nutrients than other plants. Leaving the clippings and adding compost in spring and fall eliminates the need for additional fertilizer most of the time. If the blades are not growing or are light green in color, then additional fertilizer may be needed. Apply only after April 15 and before November 1.

5. Water

Of course, I'm going to encourage you to cut back on water. And by following all the aforementioned rules, you can dramatically reduce water usage to no more than once a week. The most important times of the year to water are spring and fall. Plants in South Texas are adapted to grow in spring and fall, not summer. Help them with their natural tendencies.

No need for complex chemicals or chants. Select, mow, compost and water are all it takes to maintain a healthy, green lawn.