

Carpetgrass

Lawn Maintenance 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 through May

Mowing Mow the lawn to 1 ½ inches when it turns green in the spring. Do not let it grow taller than 2 ¼ inches. Use a rotary mower to remove the seedheads. NEVER burn carpetgrass to remove excessive debris.

Fertilization DO NOT apply nitrogen now. Have the soil tested every third year to determine nutrient and lime requirements. (Contact your Cooperative Extension center for details.)

Watering Make sure your lawn gets 1 inch of water each week. If it doesn't rain enough, you may need to water. In dry, sandy soils, you may need to water ½ inch every third or fourth day. Proper irrigation helps prevent or reduce problems in the summer.

Insect Control Check for white grubs, mole crickets, armyworms, and sod webworms. On dry, well-drained soils, also check for nematodes. If you suspect nematode damage, ask your Cooperative Extension agent how to submit a sample for analysis.

Weed Control Unless your Cooperative Extension agent suggests otherwise, do not make a broadcast application of herbicide. Carpetgrass is sensitive to most herbicides, and most herbicides are not labeled for use on carpetgrass. Manage weeds by hand pulling and mowing.

Renovation Replant bare areas no earlier than April 15 (or when average daytime temperatures are continually above 60°F). Use 2 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet or 1 ½ bushels of sprigs per 1,000 square feet. (One square yard of turf pulled apart is equivalent to one bushel of sprigs.) It's easier to spread seed if you mix it with fine sand. Rake seeds into the soil or cover the seeds lightly with light soil. Keep the seedbed continually moist, but not soggy, with several light waterings daily for several weeks. Seeds should germinate in 7 to 10 days. Continue to water regularly for several weeks to keep seedlings from dying.

Thatch Removal Thatch (layer of undecomposed grass) is usually not a problem unless you overfertilize or overwater. If thatch is thicker than ½ inch, power rake (vertical mow) lightly several weeks after spring greenup. Space blades 2 to 3 inches apart and ¼ inch deep in one direction. Do not use a vertical mower with a 1-inch blade spacing or you will severely damage your lawn.

June through August

Mowing Mow grass to 1 ½ inches with a rotary mower, every 10 to 14 days, or before grass grows above 2 ¼ inches tall.

Fertilization Fertilize with ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in mid-June. A second application in mid-August may enhance your lawn if you live along the coast. Use a slow-release fertilizer to help reduce or prevent Brown (Large) Patch Disease.

You need to apply ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, but how much fertilizer do you need to buy? Divide 50 by the FIRST number on the fertilizer bag. (The first number always represents nitrogen content.) For example, if you've got a 5-5-15 fertilizer, divide 50 by 5 and you get 10. That means you need to buy 10 pounds of fertilizer for every 1,000 square feet of lawn.

Watering Follow guidelines for March through May.

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Weed Control Follow guidelines for March through May.

Insect Control Follow guidelines for March through May.

Disease Control Watch for Brown (Large) Patch Disease, which shows up as circular patches of brown grass up to several feet in diameter (see *Diseases of Warm-Season Grasses*, AG-360).

September through November

Mowing Raise the height to 2 inches 4 weeks before the first expected hard freeze.

Fertilization Follow guidelines for March through May.

Insect Control Follow guidelines for March through May.

Watering Continue to water as needed to avoid wilt until your lawn begins to turn brown (the onset of dormancy). Although a dormant lawn requires less water, make sure the soil doesn't get powder dry. Sandy, well-drained soils are most susceptible to drought.

Disease Control Watch for Brown (Large) Patch Disease.

December through February

Mowing Remove lawn debris (rocks, sticks, and leaves). NEVER burn off carpetgrass to remove excessive debris.

Watering Water occasionally, especially in sandy, well-drained soils.

Weed Control Follow guidelines for March through May.

More About Carpetgrass

Carpetgrass is a slow- and low-growing, medium-green, coarsely textured turfgrass. It is a low-maintenance, general-purpose turf.

Carpetgrass looks like St. Augustinegrass except that it produces a crabgrass-like seedhead that some people don't like. Carpetgrass blends well with centipede grass. Lawns that contain both grasses should be maintained as centipede grass. (See *Centipede Grass Lawn Maintenance Calendar*, AG-381.)

Carpetgrass requires only 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year, and it doesn't need to be mowed frequently. Carpetgrass grows well in full sun to moderate shade and performs well in wet, shady, acid soils where other grasses may not grow. It does not tolerate cold, drought, salt, and wear. It grows best in full sunlight, when daytime temperatures are between 60° and 90°F. It may be necessary to water in dry, well-drained soils every third or fourth day.

Carpetgrass is most susceptible to Brown (Large) Patch Disease (especially in warm, wet-soil conditions) and to mole crickets, armyworms, sod webworms, and nematodes. (See AG-360, *Diseases of Warm Season Grasses*, AG-360; and *Insect Management of Turf*, AG-447.) If insect or disease problems are suspected, talk with your county Cooperative Extension agent about submitting a soil sample for analysis.

Weed problems are rare because carpetgrass grows vigorously and covers well. Carpetgrass is sensitive to many herbicides. In addition, most herbicides are not labeled for carpetgrass. Contact your local Cooperative Extension agent if you have questions about pesticides.

Following proper lawn-management practices is the best means of preventing and controlling problems in carpetgrass. If you continue to have problems growing carpetgrass in an area, you may need to choose another species.

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For more information, visit the N.C. State Turf-files Web site at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/TurfFiles/>



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