TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT TIPS for most California Counties

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Cool Season Grasses: Bentgrass (creeping), Bluegrass (Kentucky), Tall Fescue, Red fescue (creeping, fine fescue), Ryegrass (annual & perennial)

Warm Season Grasses: Dormancy starts when soil temperatures drop to ~55^{0}F.
Bermuda (common & hybrid [Tifgreen, Tifway II, and Santa Ana]), St. Augustine, Zoysia (El Toro)
Buffalograss (UC Verde)

Turf Species	Active Growth*	Nitrogen (lbs/1000 sq ft per month)	Lbs N per year	Mowing Height-inches	De-Thatch
Cool Season				**	
Bentgrass, creeping	Feb - Jun & Sept - Nov	1	4 to 6	¼ or less	often
Tall fescue (turf type)	Feb – Jun & Sept - Nov	½ - ¾	3 to 6	1½ - 3	occasionally
Kentucky bluegrass***	Feb – May & Oct – Dec	½ - ¾	4 to 6	2 – 2½	often
Annual ryegrass (overseed)	Oct – Apr	¾	2	1½ – 2	never
Perennial ryegrass (overseed)	Feb – Jun & Oct – Dec	½ - ¾	4 to 6	1½ – 2	rarely
Warm Season					
Bermuda, common	Apr – Sept	¾ - 1	2 to 4	¾ – 1	often
Bermuda, hybrid	Apr – Sept	¾ - 1	4 to 6		very often
Tifgreen				¼ – ½	"
Tifway II				½ – ¾	"
Santa Ana				½ – ¾	"
Buffalograss	Apr - Sept	½	2 - 4	varies	occasionally
St. Augustine	Mar – Oct	½ - ¾	4	¾ – 1½	rarely
Zoysia	Apr – Oct	½ - ¾	3 – 4	¾ – 1	sometimes

***Fertilization:** Nitrogen is the main element that is needed for lawns, but it is okay to apply a complete fertilizer (N-P-K) whenever you fertilize. There are many good brands of fertilizer on the market, but because each contains a different amount of Nitrogen, you must follow label instructions on how much to apply. The above guidelines talk about how much actual nitrogen to apply. **For a vigorous, dense growth of turfgrass apply nitrogen monthly during the year when the turf is actively growing.** Cool season grasses should receive most of their fertilizers in the spring and early fall (and no fertilizer should be applied in the hot summer months). Warm season grasses are fertilized for the first time when the lawn has fully greened up in the spring. The last application should be 6 to 8 weeks before the likely date of the first frost.

Mowing: Height and frequency of mowing is critical for grass blades and root growth and for preventing weed invasion. Roots and blades balance each other…(remember the blades make the food through photosynthesis and the food travels down to the roots for root growth and storage. If the blades are cut drastically, it has a negative reaction on the roots. The food stored in the roots gets shifted into leaf blade production. This is all fine, but it can be a stress when environmental conditions are harsh as in our summer months when maximum root development is needed to supply enough water to the grass blades. For this reason we have the following mowing tip: **Mow turf so that no more than one-third of the leaf blade is taken off at each cutting.** **In summer cool season grasses may be mowed slightly higher.

Thatch Removal & Aeration: Thatch (old grass roots & stems) develops when turf organic matter develops faster than organic matter is decomposed. Creeping species such as bentgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, bermudagrass, St. Augustine, and zoysigrass can produce a thick thatch and should be verticut and raked as needed. Bunch grasses typically produce less thatch and a light vertical cut may be needed on occasion. Aeration (coring) helps alleviate soil compaction and improves water infiltration in the soil and air supply to the roots. Thatch removal and aeration should be done before overseeding OR before preemergence herbicides are applied.

Watering: Early morning is the best time to water. Water pressure is high, little evaporation occurs, and the lawn will dry in the sun so diseases don't invade. Daytime watering is fine, however almost half of the water applied is evaporated into the air and never gets to the roots. Early evening watering can lead to disease problems. Water deeply and infrequently; sprinkle enough water to wet the entire root zone of the turf and avoid light frequent irrigations. Adjust the amount of water applied to the season and weather conditions.

***Kentucky bluegrass is not recommended for most hot interior valleys of California.