



THE
ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

LAWN CARE

2017

HOUSTON



Lawn Care Seasonal Calendar



Keeping a green and healthy yard can be a challenge in parts of the country which have warmer climates with less frequent rainfall. Taking the following steps to take care of your outdoor spaces will help you make your yard the envy of the neighborhood.



WINTER

- Check all lawn equipment (mowers, edgers, blowers, shears, gloves, etc.) to make sure it is all in working order.
- Remove dead growth and leaves and prune trees to remove thatch and encourage new growth.
- Inspect your yard for signs of diseases or pests.
- Consider having your lawn's pH tested to determine which nutrients your soil needs.
- Begin planning for any landscape enhancements you plan to make over the upcoming year.



SUMMER

- Aerate your soil to avoid soil compaction and to allow water and nutrients to reach plant root systems.
- Apply post-emergent herbicides when grass is actively growing and weeds begin to appear to control further growth.
- Edge to keep your yard neat and tidy.
- Remove weeds, as needed.
- Inspect your yard for signs of grubs and chinch bugs and apply insecticides as needed.
- Water your grass deeply to ensure moisture reaches the roots.



SPRING

- Once your grass starts to grow, begin mowing. Consider leaving clippings on your lawn, unless you see signs of a lawn disease.
- Perform any needed maintenance on sprinklers to ensure they can nourish your lawn in the coming months.
- Treat for weeds with a pre-emergent herbicide or corn gluten if you tend to have problems later on in the year.
- Add new plants to your landscape to replace any which did not survive the winter months.
- Begin applying fertilizer to your lawn as temperatures climb, and continue to feed your grass throughout the summer months.
- Apply a layer of mulch to beds to help plants retain moisture.
- Begin a watering schedule if you stopped watering regularly during the winter months.



FALL

- Reseed grass now to fill in bare spots in your lawn from the summer months.
- Add any new trees and shrubs to your landscape to allow them to take root before temperatures drop.
- In the early part of October, apply fertilizer if grass looks unhealthy.
- Rake leaves and clear other debris to reduce pest hiding spots.

NEED HELP WITH YOUR LAWN?

Call us at (281) 730-9500 or schedule a service at abchomeandcommercial.com/houston

What Kind of Grass is Best For My Lawn?



In warm-weather climates, keeping your lawn green and vibrant year-round can be a tall order. Learn about which types of grass do best under which conditions.

ST. AUGUSTINE

ZOYSIA

BUFFALO GRASS

BERMUDA GRASS

SUN EXPOSURE

- Full sun
- Tolerates dappled sun

- Fair share tolerance

- Full sun
- Poor share tolerance

- Full sun
- Poor share tolerance

TRAFFIC TOLERANCE

Low

Fair

Low

High

WEATHER TOLERANCE

- High
- Best cold tolerance

- Low
- Goes dormant in drought conditions, rebounds after rainfall

- Low
- Goes dormant in early fall or during drought conditions and requires almost no water

- High
- Requires almost no water when dormant

PEST & DISEASE RESISTANCE

Low

Moderate

Moderate

High

MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

- High
- Requires regular mowing, fertilization and irrigation

- Moderate
- Thatch needs to be removed every few years and responds best to reel mower

- Low
- Looks best between 4-5" tall

- Moderate
- Gets thicker with more frequent mowing with a reel mower and irrigation

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All You Need To Know About Common Lawn Pests



Learn about the most common lawn pests, how to know if they are in your yard and how to get rid of them.

SOUTHERN CHINCH BUGS

Chinch bugs are the top pests for St. Augustine grass, although they can also feed on other grass species. Small and slender with white wings with distinctive black triangular marks.

THE SIGNS:

- Appearance of large numbers of live insects which are visible when you part the grass
- Irregular patches of dead grass surrounded by a perimeter of dead grass
- Impact can resemble drought damage

MANAGING & PREVENTING CHINCH BUGS:

- Keep lawn thatch to a minimum with regular mowing, aeration and top-dressing
- Avoid applying excessive fertilizer
- Lower the amount of applied nitrogen in turfgrass
- Ensure grass doesn't receive too much or too little moisture
- Utilize predatory insects, including big-eyed bugs, minute pirate bugs and ants
- Apply insecticide with spot treatments to prevent further damage

APHIDS

These tiny insects can infest a single plant, attacking new growth, eating sap and leaving a waste residue which can stimulate fungal growth and block sunlight.

THE SIGNS:

- Misshapen, curling, damaged or yellowed plant leaves.
- Presence of the aphids themselves on the underside of leaves.
- A sticky, sugary liquid which may attract other insects, such as ants, which feed off this aphid waste product
- Misshapen flowers or fruit that aphids have fed on

MANAGING & PREVENTING APHIDS:

- Introduce beneficial bugs, such as ladybugs and lacewings
- Keep ants from protecting the aphids from predators with sticky barriers
- Spray infested plants with water from a high-pressure hose to dislodge the aphids
- Use specially-formulated soaps and horticultural oils to control the spread of the pests
- If possible, cover vegetables with row covers to protect crops while allowing sunlight, air and water to get in

WHITE GRUBS

White grubs are the larval stage of insects known as June bugs. Several species of white grubs cause significant damage to Bermuda grass, Zoysia, St. Augustine and Buffalo grass roots.

THE SIGNS:

- Irregularly-shaped brown, dead patches of grass
- An influx of birds, skunks, armadillos, raccoons or moles which may tear up your yard in search of larvae to eat
- Weakened grass root system and areas which are more vulnerable to weeds
- Spongy turf
- Severely damaged turf can be rolled like a carpet

MANAGING & PREVENTING WHITE GRUBS:

- Beneficial nematodes can attack white grubs and other insects in your soil
- Walking across your grass with spiked sandals can aerate your turf and may be successful at controlling grubs
- Apply pesticides when grubs first hatch in mid- to late summer and into early fall, as this is when the grubs do the most damage
- Treat your grass with preventative products along with water to help move pesticides down toward the soil and encourage grubs to move towards surface

GRASSHOPPERS

Although grasshoppers tend to be more prevalent in rural communities or less disturbed areas, these insects occasionally make their way into our lawns, where they can feast on ornamental landscapes.

THE SIGNS:

- Holes in plant tissue
- Dark droppings on plants
- Misshapen fruit

MANAGING & PREVENTING GRASSHOPPERS:

- Grasshopper management is difficult during outbreak years
- Parasitic nematodes, yellow jackets and birds are natural predators and can be attracted by the incorporation of certain flowers into your landscape
- Residual insecticides can protect your more valuable plants
- Floating row covers can protect vegetables
- Substitute plants grasshoppers do not prefer, such as beautyberry, crepe myrtle, dwarf yaupon, lantana, rock rose and Turk's cap

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Watering Dos and Don'ts



Water is a key ingredient in keeping your outdoor spaces thriving. Follow these dos and don'ts to keep your lawn well-hydrated.

DO

- Water only when your grass shows symptoms of stress, such as having a blue-gray tint, wilting or curling leaves or footprints which remain on the grass longer than normal.
- Water deeply by wetting the soil to a depth of six inches so that moisture makes its way to your plants' root systems.
- Water your lawn more after applying fertilizers or putting in new plants or trees, since freshly-fertilized lawns and new plants absorb more water.
- Pay attention to run-off onto your driveway and street which may indicate that you need to adjust your sprinklers, that you have a leak or that you are watering too much.
- Choose native plants and grasses which are adapted to warmer climates and require less frequent watering.

DON'T

- Water at night, since excessive moisture can lead to development of fungus and disease, or in the middle of the day, since you will lose moisture to evaporation. The ideal time to water is early in the morning.
- Assume all the plant species in your lawn should be watered on the same schedule. Monitor your lawn to see how different plants fare during different seasons and adjust your irrigation schedule accordingly.
- Cut your grass too short, as this will compromise your lawn's ability to draw and retain moisture.
- Skip on mulch during the springtime. Applying mulch on bare ground will help your lawn retain moisture and prevent runoff when watering.
- Water after a heavy rainfall. Make sure your sprinkler system's rain gauge is accurate so you aren't watering saturated soil, which can lead to runoff.

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Six Ways to Enhance Your Curb Appeal



Your home's exterior can make a big impression. While homeowners can easily spend thousands of dollars making major updates, small projects can go a long way to improving your curb appeal. Try these tips to give your property an aesthetic upgrade:

1 UPDATE YOUR LANDSCAPING

It could be time to change the design or add a pop of color to your front yard with new flowers or plants. Adding a border around trees or gardens is a nice way to accent the style of your home.

4 SWITCH OUT YOUR HOUSE NUMBERS

There are a variety of options to choose from regarding size, font and color. It's a small change that can make a huge difference.

2 GIVE YOUR DRIVEWAY SOME TLC

Pressure wash the driveway to get rid of any oil stains or excess dirt. Pull weeds and repair any cracks that may have happened over the years.

5 LIGHT THE WAY

Adding lights to your walkway or near your plant beds ensures your home looks good even after the sun goes down.

3 PAINT YOUR TRIM AND SHUTTERS

Whether it's repainting your existing colors or opting for something bold and new, fresh paint offers an instant makeover.

6 CHANGE THE LOOK OF YOUR FRONT DOOR

The entryway can truly be a game changer. Shop around and find a new style or refinish your wooden door to catch the eye of everyone who passes by.

“A little help goes a long way. ABC is here to lend a helping hand when you need it.”

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Plants With a Purpose



Certain plants do better under different conditions. Learn more about what plants to use in different situations, whether you are trying to deter deer, keep mosquitoes away or keep your landscape thriving in shade or full sun.

MOSQUITO REPELLENT:



Citronella



Lemongrass



Marigold



Lavender

DEER DETERRENT:



Sage



Thyme



Oleander



Rosemary

FOR THE SHADE:



Columbine



Purple Heart



Shrimp Plant



Autumn Sage

FOR THE SUN:



Shasta Daisies



Purple Coneflowers



Succulents



Verbena

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Beneficial Bugs



Not all bugs are bad. These insects can benefit your yard and plants:



GROUND BEETLES

(Coleoptera)

There are over 3,000 different types of ground beetles. Both adults and larvae can be beneficial in pest control and weed management. They feed at night and range from $\frac{1}{8}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long in length.



GREEN LACEWINGS

(Chrysoperla)

Adult lacewings are pale green, about one-inch long with four wings and shiny, golden eyes. In the larval stage, lacewings feed largely number of small insects and insect eggs, but as adults they only feed on nectar.



DRAGONFLY

(Odonate)

Dragonflies come in many sizes and can grow up to four inches in length. They are large, heavy-bodied insects that prey on midges, mosquitoes, moths and other flying insects that may invade your garden. Sometimes they even eat spiders! The larvae, or nymphs, live in water and can catch and eat small fish such as bloodworms. Most dragonflies live about six months but in some cases, larger dragonflies live up to six or seven years. They do not bite and can even be held in your hand.



PREDATORY STINKBUGS

(Linnaeus)

They are easily distinguishable from other stink bugs by the large red spots on their black bodies. Predatory stink bugs measure anywhere from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ an inch in length, with the females being larger. These stinkbugs prey on plant-damaging bugs; they feed on more than 100 species of insects and will attack pests larger than themselves by sucking the body fluids of their prey with a needle-like beak.



SPINED SOLDIER BUG

(Podisus)

Adults are about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length and are mottled brown in color and have a prominent spine on each shoulder. They prey on arthropods and other insect larvae.



GARDEN SPIDERS

(Agriope)

Garden spiders are black and yellow. Females can vary from $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch in length while males are much smaller only growing from $\frac{1}{5}$ to $\frac{2}{5}$ inch in length. They produce venom to immobilize their prey and keep flying insects like bees, flies and others that are caught in their web. They are typically not aggressive toward humans but if you get bitten, it is no more painful than a bee sting. Their lifespan is usually about a year and they usually die in the winter.



LADYBUGS

(Coccinellidae)

These tiny, red beetles have small black spots on their wings and help consume aphids, mealybugs and other pests that damage your garden. They also lay their eggs among the aphids so that newborn larvae can feed on prey.



HONEYBEES

(Hymenoptera)

Honeybees are brightly-colored with black and yellow stripes which act as a defense mechanism to warn predators to stay away. They can live up to 24 days. The honeybee's wings are extremely fast which is what creates the "buzzing" noise when they fly by. Honeybees can fly up to six miles at 15 mph. These insects are beneficial to your garden because they keep your flowers in bloom by pollinating your plants. Not only are honeybees beneficial to your garden but also to the environment as a whole. Bees are the only insect that produces food eaten by humans.

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