



A soil test is the best way to discover any pH problems, as well as get the best fertilizer rate recommendations

**B**eautiful lawns are built, not born. Like all living things, grass has a variety of needs. These needs are inter-related. A successful lawn-care program does not have to be time consuming to be effective. You just need to follow a few simple procedures.

Some lawn care practices are counter-productive to building a healthy, low-maintenance lawn. These practices include fertilizing too much, watering too frequently, mowing too closely, and seldom aerating the soil. By changing some of these practices, it is possible to dramatically improve the condition of your lawn.

The most important step in the development of an attractive, sturdy lawn is to improve the soil in which the grass grows. If the soil is healthy and well aerated, it will be able to carry out its natural biological processes.

### Soil

It is very difficult to grow healthy grass in compacted soil. To improve the soil, you should begin by aerating the lawn at least once a year.

After aerating your lawn, add valuable organic matter to the soil. The easiest way is to mulch your grass clippings every time you mow. The soil will also benefit from a thin layer of organic material such as compost, applied every spring.

Your lawn needs certain nutrients in properly balanced amounts for healthy growth. Many minerals the lawn needs are already in the soil. Others, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, need to be added periodically. In order for these nutrients to be effectively absorbed and utilized, the pH level of the soil needs to be nearly neutral. A soil test by the County Extension Service in your area can give you an accurate soil pH reading.

### Grass

The variety of grass you choose when renovating or establishing your lawn is very important. It is vital to select a combination of appropriate grasses that grow well in your soil and region. The key is to upgrade the turfgrass by introducing one or more of the modern, hardy grass varieties.

You can eliminate many lawn problems by mowing at the right height, fertilizing and watering sensibly, and keeping your mower blades sharpened monthly. Cool season grasses do best when mowed at a consistent height, about 3-3 1/2 inches. Warm season grasses (southern) should be mowed around 1-1 1/2 inches.

### Watering

Water your lawn whenever the soil begins to dry out. Infrequent

watering is much better than frequent light sprinkling because it encourages strong root development. Slow, deep, and thorough waterings are needed for healthy root growth. The opposite is true for new seedings, they need to stay moist in order to germinate.

If you have been watering adequately but brown patches or bare spots begin to appear in the lawn, you may have insect or disease activity. Check your lawn periodically for signs of adverse activities and treat the area promptly.

Once you make the necessary changes to improve the quality of your soil, you will notice a dramatic improvement in your lawn. By choosing sturdy, new grass seed, and aerating more often, you will be well on your way to enjoying a healthy, attractive lawn.

