

# Garden Maintenance Guide



Your new home has freshly laid lawn there are several tips and guidelines that will help you get the most out of your garden. Your garden has been laid with quality turf and creating it into an established lawn is the responsibility of the resident, which will include watering, cutting and feeding as a minimum.

This factsheet has been prepared as a guide on what to expect and how to care for your lawn. The information is only a guide as there are many other factors such as soil type and time of year to be considered. By spending a little time and effort maintaining the lawn, especially through its first season, you will reap dividends later on.

## **After the lawn is laid**

It is important not to walk on the newly laid turf, even for the purposes of watering, for a period of approximately six weeks to avoid damage. The garden will have been compacted during the construction process and the level of firmness will depend on many factors, i.e. the length of time between applying topsoil and turf, the depth of top soil, soil types and weather conditions. Soil on new developments will settle in time, however this may take several months. If there is a need to walk on the lawn within the first month, we strongly recommend the usage of boards (e.g. scaffolding boards) to spread your weight and minimize indentations, especially when watering.

## Watering

Correct watering of the new turf is the single most important step to growing a successful lawn. Incorrect watering (both over and under watering) can cause long lasting damage. Gaps that appear between individual turfs (rolls of grass) is a sure sign that there has been insufficient watering whilst the turf is 'bedding in.'

How to apply water – For even distribution of water, a hosepipe and sprinkler is recommended as uneven watering will create an uneven lawn.

How much water – For watering to be effective, a sufficient supply of water must get to the roots of the turf. A good way of telling whether you have got the water to the roots is to lift the corner of the turf and check that the ground below is moist. Remember it is the roots that require the water, not the blades of grass. Do not rely on rainwater to supply a reliable supply, even in the cooler seasons.

How often – It is recommended that the turf is watered twice daily for the first two weeks until it becomes firmly rooted. Please ensure the whole lawn is thoroughly watered, paying attention to the edges. In hotter Summer months, the best time to water the turf is early morning and again in the evening. As a general guide, turf laid between May and September will probably require watering twice daily for at least the first two weeks, then once a day for a week, reducing gradually as the roots take hold.

It is very important to continue watering even when it has rained. Gaps appearing between individual turfs and yellow/browning of the grass is a sign of insufficient watering, not faulty turf.

Overwatering – Applying too much water may also cause problems as it can cause the soil to become saturated or soggy and will not allow the turf to breathe. Prolonged flooding can cause disease and kill the turf.



## Mowing

Regular mowing is the most necessary maintenance procedure with any lawn and must be carried out before the grass gets too long. The maximum height should not exceed 50mm/2in (about half the length of the long edge of a credit card). However, extra care must be taken when cutting the turf in the first few months.

First cut – Mowing can only begin once the newly laid turf is firmly rooted into the soil. This is typically six weeks after being laid. Mowing is a stress on the plant so only mow when the grass is dry, and the ground is firm. Mow the lawn once the grass reaches over 40mm/ 1.5 inches and set your mower to the highest setting. Please ensure that the mower blades are sharp and never remove more than one third of the grass length at any one time.

Further mows – Frequent mowing will stimulate growth and encourage regular development of new shoots. Try to mow the lawn in several directions and as frequently as time permits. Always remember to remove the clippings as if left, they will smother the growth of other grasses and build-up may lead to disease of the lawn.

Please remember to reduce the height of the grass only fractionally each time you mow, reducing it to a minimum of 25mm/1 inch. Do not mow the turf too low as root development will be restricted – especially in its first few months.

How often – Peak periods of grass growth are between Spring and Autumn and a weekly mow is recommended. This, however, is only a guide and it will depend on the time of year the turf was laid. In Winter, mow if there has been a spell of mild weather that has stimulated the grass to grow. It is recommended only to mow when the grass is dry, however if the weather is continually wet, you should only mow to prevent the grass from becoming too high.

#### Feeding

Nutrients are lost through the soil, and lawns benefit from a slow-release fertilizer and weeding each Spring and Autumn. Feed between March and October, applying evenly and according to the manufacturer's instructions. Apply the feed before light rain is expected and never during a dry spell. If there is no rainfall within 48 hours, ensure the lawn is well watered.

#### Top Dressing

This is composed of horticultural sand mixed with silt, clay, loam and grass seed to repair any wear/tear and undulations that may have occurred during the Winter or Summer months. The most favorable time for top dressing and rolling lawns is April to June and August to September.

#### Toadstools

These grow naturally and appear in both new and long-established turf from spores found in the soil when weather conditions are warm and wet. They do not damage the lawn and can be removed through frequent mowing.

#### Leatherjackets

These are larvae of the Crane Fly (Daddy Longlegs) and the adult lays eggs between July and September in grass areas. Eggs hatch two to three weeks later, and the larvae (leatherjackets) live in the soil feeding on the roots in mild, damp conditions from Autumn to late Spring. Patches of turf die back, and birds are seen pecking at the turf in numbers. Aerating the lawn (by spiking it) will improve the drainage and help prevent infestation, together with regular maintenance/feeding to help the grass remain strong and repel possible outbreaks.



Weeding – It is essential to keep beds free of weeds as they will compete with trees/plants for water and will affect their growth. Applying crushed bark or leaf mould mulch will inhibit weed growth and help retain moisture.

Trees provided as part of the landscaping – These will generally have been staked and tied. Please check these intermittently for signs of chafing/tightening as the tree grows and make any necessary adjustments.

### General maintenance once your lawn is established

January – Generally a quiet month for lawn maintenance, removal of leaves should be undertaken. Excessive foot traffic on frosted and sodden lawns will not assist you in later months.

February – Sweeping of leaves and removal of any worm casts when dry conditions are available.

March – In dry weather give the lawn a good raking to clear of all debris and moss. A light rolling will also help firm up the ground after Winter frosts. March is the first chance to mow the lawn, and you should not remove more than a third of the grass. Avoid mowing low as this will turn your lawn an unsightly white or yellow. March is a good opportunity to look at the edges of your lawn and repair any damaged areas. Use a half-moon edging tool to neaten lawn edges.

April – Time to feed your lawn (nitrogen) and weed it, which depends on the weather – wait for it to be warm and the grass to grow. Rake out all the dead moss after two weeks of using a moss killer, use a lawn sand. Keep the lawn cut to 50mm/two inches high, but do not ever remove more than a third of the grass as you could expose the lawn to a late frost.

May – Mowing starts in earnest and the lawn height can gradually be brought down, slowly. Mowing once a week is generally required. In dry spells ensure that you spot treat any weed problems.

June – Mowing twice a week may be necessary; this does help thicken the lawn. Rake lightly before mowing to raise any trailing stems. Use long handled shears to keep the edges neat. A Foliar feed may prove beneficial to keep the lawn lush and green in appearance. Keep an eye out for weeds and either pull out or spray whenever they are noticed.

July – If the weather becomes dry, you must raise the height of your mower and consider watering your grass in the early mornings or evenings, especially when long periods of dry weather occur. Spike the lawn if the ground is baked to allow any water to soak in. Always keep a check on the edges for trimming and weeds.

August – High nitrogen fertilizer should be applied to assist with the growth. If you are unable to mow the lawn then do remember to reduce the height gradually, just like at the beginning of the season, otherwise you will damage the grass.

September – This is the most important month for lawn maintenance. Allow the height of the lawn to increase by 25% and only mow to how fast the grass is growing. Scarify the lawn to remove debris and thatch – this will encourage side shoots and avoid the lawn to thicken. Top dressing can be considered for avid gardeners, or if you have small lumps and bumps in the lawn you can address these through rolling. Overall, it will improve the condition of the soil and lawn if you do this on a regular basis. Don't forget to weed and feed.

October – Reduce the number of times you mow the lawn and allow the height of the grass to raise ready for the Winter. Weed and feed the lawn, remove all leaves and it will prevent the grass from growing and reduce worm activity over the Winter.

November – The last mow should be done half an inch above your Summer mowing level. All leaves should be raked and cleared. Try not to walk on the lawn if there is a frost or snow, or if the ground is waterlogged.

December – A final sweep of the leaves to tidy the garden.

This information above is only provided as a guide. The most important point to remember is that the new turf lawn is a mass of plants that require a correct balance of water, sunlight, and food to survive. Your lawn will be susceptible to pests and diseases, but a good maintenance regime will minimize this threat and allow the lawn to thrive and be enjoyed throughout the year.