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Management of Bermuda grass lawns during the fall months has a pronounced effect upon their growth the next spring and summer. Proper watering, mowing and fertilizing of Bermuda this fall will determine to a large extent its density, color and freedom from weeds when it emerges in the spring.

Water Less in Winter

Watering during the dormant period in winter is necessary to prevent drying of the rhizomes, but at less frequent intervals than during the summer. Winter rains are usually sufficient to maintain proper soil moisture, although a heavy watering at intervals of six to eight weeks is recommended during prolonged dry periods.

Light frequent watering discourages deep root penetration and evidence of wilting will be visible after two or three days during the summer. Frequent light watering also enables shallow-rooted weeds to gain a foothold in Bermuda turf and, in some instances, completely crowd it out.

Deep rooted Bermuda can draw upon soil moisture from lower depths and maintain a proper moisture supply if this lower strata has been properly watered. Shallow rooted weeds, growing in the upper foot of soil, would be stressing for moisture under this type of water management, allowing Bermuda to better compete with most weeds.

Sprinkle For An Hour

Bermuda grass growing in deep soils is generally watered at 3 to 5 day intervals during the summer months. In order to moisten the soil at depths varying from 3 to 4 feet, it will be necessary to wet any given area from 45 minutes to one hour.

Correct mowing practices during late fall can also discourage weed infestation in Bermuda the following spring. The cutter bar of the mower should be adjusted to cut at a height of 1½ to 2 inches, starting in September and continuing until the first frost. Mowing at this height allows the turf to become dense and compact and protects the lower portion of the leaf blades temporarily from frost damage. A thick turf also permits longer use as a play area before all the grass leaf surface has been exposed to frost.



Bermuda Lawns

Prior to the emergence of Bermuda during the latter part of March, the mower should be reset to cut at 3/4 inch. This close mowing is necessary to remove all dead leaves and runners and to encourage development of new growth.

Clip Close In Spring

All clippings should be removed during the mowing operation and raked thoroughly to remove as much dead material as possible. Removal of dead leaves and stems is necessary to prevent a build up of thatch which shades the soil and slows down water penetration, thus retarding early emergence. Close mowing in early spring encourages rapid spreading, which is necessary to prevent weeds from gaining a foothold in the lawn area.

Fertilization of Bermuda lawns during the fall and spring months is important in maintaining a healthy vigorous turf free from weeds. An application of nitrogen fertilizer during September or October will increase rhizome development and allow a build-up of a nitrogen reserve within the plants.

It has been observed that Bermuda lawns fertilized in early fall make more rapid growth in spring and crowd out summer weeds more effectively. A second nitrogen application is recommended in the spring shortly after the danger of frost has passed to further promote more

rapid spreading and increase density. Retarded growth of Bermuda during early spring, due to lack of fertilizer or frequent shallow watering, will enable weeds to compete with the grass before it can develop a thick turf.

Weed Control A Must

Eradication of weeds in a Bermuda lawn is most effective when chemical weed sprays are used during the early stages of active growth. As weeds mature they become more resistant to treatment and repeated spray applications may be necessary to obtain thorough eradication.

Most broadleaf weeds can be controlled with 2,4-D or 2,45T sprays for the more resistant types. When applying chemical sprays on weeds, thoroughly cover the leaf surface but avoid excessive drip. Accumulation of spray material in tree holes from excessive spray drip may have a toxic effect on some trees and shrubs. Either of the two chemicals are toxic to broadleaf shrubs and trees and *extreme care should be exercised to prevent drift of spray on these plants.*

Greenskeepers and experiment station workers have long recognized the importance of management practices in maintaining vigorous, weed-free Bermuda lawns. Homeowners, too, can have attractive Bermuda lawns if these basic principles are recognized and put into practice.