

Maintenance Calendar for Warm-Season Lawns in Virginia²

Authors: Mike Goatley, Shawn Askew, and David McCall, Virginia Tech. Chantel Wilson and Derik Cataldi, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Maintenance activity ^v	Month											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Planting* (Initial establishment and/or renovation)					XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX						
Nitrogen (N) Fertilization ^w		XXXXXXXX		XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX						XXXXXXXX		
PRE herbicides ^v			XXXXXXXXXX					XXXXXXXXXX				
POST herbicides ^v	XXXXXXXXXXXX		XX									XXXX
Disease concerns ^t					XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX			XXXXXXXXXXXX				
Insect concerns ^s							XXXXXXXXXXXX					
Winter overseeding ^r								XXXXXXXXXXXX				
Cultivation/dethatching					XXXXXXXXXXXX							

²Predominant warm-season turfgrasses for Virginia lawns are bermudagrass and zoysiagrass, with centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass possible in eastern Virginia.

^vPreferred timing for respective maintenance activity is indicated by an upper case ‘X’. Secondary timing indicated by lower case ‘x’.

^{*}Species/cultivars vary in establishment methods. Many improved cultivars can only be established by vegetative means (sod, sprigs, or plugs). Sod is also available for most of these grasses and while the table lists optimum and secondary planting times, sod can be established year round as long as soils are not frozen and supplemental irrigation is available when necessary.

^wInitiate N fertilization for warm-season grasses AFTER spring greening is complete. Secondary timings are only for overseeded lawns. Bermudagrass and St. Augustine grass can receive up to 4 lbs N/1000 sq ft on an annual basis, while centipedegrass and zoysiagrass should receive only 1-2 lbs N/1000 sq ft total. Applications up to 0.9 lb of readily available (water soluble) N/1000 sq ft/active growing month are recommended during primary growing months. Applications up to 0.7 lb of readily available N/per 1000 sq ft/active growing month on ryegrass overseedings. Consider the use of slowly available nitrogen (SAN) sources (those containing ≥ 15% water insoluble N) whenever possible (application levels up to 1 lb SAN/1000 sq ft per active growing month are possible) and apply other nutrients and/or lime based on soil test results. Note: it is recommended to test homelawn soils every 3-4 years.

^vSpring preemergent (PRE) herbicide applications primarily targeting summer annual grasses (crabgrass, etc.). Fall applications primarily target annual bluegrass and winter annual broadleaves such as henbit and chickweed. Before applying any PRE herbicide consider possible effects it will have on seeding desirable turfgrasses (either warm-season grasses in the spring or ryegrass overseeding in the fall). If turf is not overseeded, there is potential for winter weed control with non-selective POST (postemergent) herbicides during winter dormancy of the bermudagrass.

^wWeeds must be actively growing to achieve desirable POST herbicide control. For cool-season weeds, active growth occurs when temperatures are ≥ 50° F. For warm-season weeds, temperatures ≥ 80° F are typically required for maximum control. Do not apply POST broadleaf herbicides during spring transition period.

^tFor the most part, fungi that attack warm-season grasses during the summer are nuisance diseases that cause cosmetic damage; a possible exception would be gray leaf spot on St. Augustinegrass. On a regular basis, the primary diseases of concern for warm-season turfgrasses are spring dead spot for bermudagrass and large patch for zoysiagrass. Both should be treated in early to mid-fall even though the effects of the disease might not be seen until spring greening the following year.

^sFor the most part, insects that attack warm-season grasses during the summer will not cause sufficient damage to warrant treatment. Heavy populations of white grubs can warrant treatment in late summer in some seasons.

^rPerennial or annual ryegrass can be overseeded into bermudagrass at rates of 5-10 pounds of pure live seed/1000 sq ft for winter color. It is not recommended to overseed other warm-season grasses due to spring competition concerns during transition.