

## **Wessex HOA Lawn and Garden Maintenance Guidelines**

This guideline is designed to make it EASY to understand the MINIMUM annual maintenance that is needed to keep your lawn and garden areas healthy and clean, as REQUIRED by our Covenants. Follow the "Minimum" guidelines to keep your expenses and use of resources (water, time etc) as small as possible. As a Wessex Homeowner, you have three options:

1. You can perform the MINIMUM maintenance plan outlined below yourself, or
2. You can hire a lawn service to perform fertilization, weed control and maintenance or
3. You can follow your own plan. If you do and your lawn and gardens do not meet HOA standards, you risk fines.

Your home must meet the standards established by our Covenants: a well-tended lawn and planting beds. You MUST use some sort of weed-feed & pre emergent weed control on your lawn twice each year. If you do not, your lawn will be mostly weeds. You will receive a letter from our management company stating your lawn does not meet standards. It will take significant work and funds to bring it up to an appropriate level and you may risk fines. The cost to comply will be more than the amount you would spend over five years by following the recommended guidelines.

The dates of WHEN to do work are as critical as WHAT to use. If the timing is correct, you will NOT need to water (or at least minimize this need).

**Do NOT use any fertilizer between March 15<sup>th</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup> on your lawn, unless you are planning to water regularly!  
Even if you plan to water, do NOT EVER fertilize between May 1<sup>st</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup>!**

During most of the year, your lawn mower should be set to keep your grass at a healthy 2½ - 3 inches. This usually means setting it on one of the higher settings. In the Fall, when you make one of your last cuts, you should lower the mower one setting. This helps prevent mildew and should be done in December.

All lawn and garden areas must be kept free of weeds and maintained in a neat fashion. You must remove weeds regularly. You can pull the weeds by hand; this is very easy to do after a nice rain storm. Or you can use a broad spectrum weed killer in a liquid form with a pump sprayer, to spray any weeds as you find them. Mix up a batch of the spray in a pump sprayer to treat weeds every now and then (when you see them). Store the mixed product in a back corner of your garage away from direct light and heat. Be careful to avoid small plantings (with this spray) that you want to keep.

Use mulch or pine straw as a ground cover in garden areas to help prevent weeds and water evaporation. Mulch or straw needs to be replaced at least once a year.

Please choose the plan below that meets your needs:

- Minimum Yearly Lawn Plan
- Lawn Restoration Plan (This is to be used if you lawn has more than 35% weeds or bare areas combined.)
- Better Yearly Lawn Plan

### **Minimum Yearly Lawn Plan**

- Feb 15<sup>th</sup> – March 9<sup>th</sup>: Spring pre-emergence/fertilizer application. (Cut lawn on low setting first, 2 inches.)
- Cut Lawn Weekly – during the hot & dry summer months cut once every ten days.
- (Lawns must not exceed 8 inches in length)
- Edge your lawn in May and again in September. All areas that touch concrete (curbs, sidewalks, etc.) must be edged periodically.
- Keep garden areas mulched and clear of weeds.
- Use liquid weed killer as needed in lawn and garden areas.
- September 15<sup>th</sup> – October 1<sup>st</sup>: Fall weed and feed & trim bushes
- Remember any tree or major shrub removal needs to be applied for and approved by the Wessex ARC

The “Minimum” guide assumes that your lawn is in reasonable condition to start with. This also assumes you are using “cool” season grass, such as fescue, perennial rye, etc. (not one of the southern types of grass such as zoysia.)

Your first application should be a fertilizer and pre-emergent weed control product. You may purchase any type or brand you like but you **MUST** apply this on your lawn between February 15<sup>th</sup> and March 9<sup>th</sup>. This will enable your grass to better survive the hot summer with minimal or no watering other than that which falls from the sky. This application will help grow roots, strengthen existing grass and prevent many of the weeds that grow in our area. If you apply any fertilizer after the middle of March your lawn will struggle during the hot days that follow and you will need to water to prevent it from dying.

Watering in the summer months is optional in this plan. If you normally water your lawn you should continue to do so and it will look better. However, it is not needed to have at least a basic relatively weed-free lawn. (Do not water at night or late in the day.)

Your next application should be a weed-and-feed product (any type or brand you wish). You **MUST** apply this after September 15<sup>th</sup>. If there has been little rain, or none is predicted around this date, you should wait until approximately October 1<sup>st</sup>.

You must cut your lawn weekly. (Cut every 10 days when conditions are dry and grass is growing more slowly.) If you do not mow regularly, you will have more weeds and need to apply more lawn care products to control them.

You must edge your lawn at least twice a year -- recommended times are May and September.

### **Lawn Restoration Plan**

Use this if your lawn is more than 35% weeds and bare areas combined.

- Feb 15<sup>th</sup> – March 9<sup>th</sup>: Spring pre-emergent weed control/fertilizer application. (Cut lawn on low setting first, 2 inches.)
- Cut Lawn Weekly – during the hot & dry summer months cut once every ten days.

- (Lawns must not exceed 8 inches in length.)
- Edge your lawn in May and again in September. All areas that touch concrete (curbs, sidewalks, etc.).
  - Keep garden areas mulched and clear of weeds.
  - Use liquid weed killer as needed in lawn and garden areas.
  - August 23-September 1<sup>st</sup>: water lawn thoroughly (1 inch water).
  - September 6-12<sup>th</sup>: apply broad spectrum weed and feed.
  - Seed lawn two weeks after weed killer is applied and use no more weed killer for four weeks. Be sure to use aerator or slit seeder. Apply starter fertilizer and lime. Water for at least two weeks.
  - October 29<sup>th</sup> – November 15<sup>th</sup>: Fall/Winter fertilizer application & trim bushes.

If your lawn is in poor shape, you will need to do a little more work during the first 18 months to restore it. Follow the Lawn Restoration Plan outlined above. Getting a nice lawn established takes extra work and extra water. But once the healthy lawn is in place, you can use the Minimum Plan outlined above to keep it looking nice.

Plan to start your prep work the first week in September. If there has been no rain during the last few weeks prior to this, thoroughly water your lawn first. Within one week of watering, apply a broad spectrum weed killer. The liquid type is the easiest to use with a hand sprayer. This will help eliminate most of the weed growth that has accumulated over the years.

If your lawn has lots of weeds, you need to use one of the quality weed-and-feed products instead of the liquid. This may only come with fertilizer as a part of the product. If that is the case, you will need to thoroughly water one day each week for the following four weeks, unless it rains weekly. If your lawn is mostly weeds, you'll need to re-seed.

To re-seed your lawn, you must either aerate and seed or slit seed the first or second week in October. You may want to hire someone with power equipment to do this job. Even if it rains, you must provide some water to assist in seed germination. The lawn must stay damp during the first two weeks. Water a few minutes in each area. The idea is to dampen the seed but not soak the lawn on a daily basis. To reiterate, you should do this even if it rains. Seeds that are visible (lying on the ground, seeds not in the plugs or slits) will not germinate well unless kept damp. The seeds in the slits or plugs will almost all germinate with just a little water over time.

Next, you will need to fertilize again with a fall/winter fertilizer that does NOT contain any weed killer. This should be done around the end of October or the first week in November. Follow the Minimum Yearly Lawn Plan spring schedule. The following Labor Day, evaluate your progress. If your lawn is still in poor shape, you must repeat some of the steps from the previous year. If it is better, but still not healthy, consider re-seeding again. Then follow the Minimum Yearly Lawn Plan but add another fertilizer application in the middle of November.

### **Better Yearly Lawn Plan**

- Feb 15<sup>th</sup> – March 9<sup>th</sup>: Spring pre-emergent weed control/fertilizer application. (Cut lawn on low setting first, 2 inches.)
- Cut Lawn Weekly – during the hot & dry summer months cut once every ten days. (Lawns must not exceed 8 inches in length.)

- Edge your lawn in May and again in September. All areas that touch concrete (curbs, sidewalks, etc.).
- Keep garden areas mulched and clear of weeds.
- Use liquid weed killer as needed in lawn and garden areas.
- September 15<sup>th</sup> – October 1<sup>st</sup>: Fall weed and feed.
- October 15<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup>: Fall fertilizer at 50-75% of recommended application rate on bag. Trim bushes.
- November 15<sup>th</sup> – December 1<sup>st</sup>: Fall fertilizer at 50-75% of recommended application rate on bag.
- Water lawn as needed during May, June, July, August and September, not to exceed one inch of water total with no more than two days of active watering. Watering more often almost guarantees fungus growth.
- Use anti fungal as a preventative in early June

Just follow the outline as shown above. The Better Yearly Lawn Plan is a relatively inexpensive plan that will enhance the look of your home. Most of the work is done when the weather is cooler and avoided during the hot days of summer. All the plans are designed to grow healthy roots first and green weed-free lawns second. This minimizes the amount of expense and work needed.

### **Lawn Services**

Many homeowners hire professionals to keep their lawns looking great. This is a good option if you don't like yard work or don't want to invest in equipment. Lawn Service companies will follow their own schedule, provide the necessary fertilizers and chemicals, and will guarantee results. The cost is very reasonable if you sign up for their yearly plan. Here is a list of names of some companies that already work for some of your Wessex neighbors.

Yardnique (919) 388-9878 [www.yardnique.com](http://www.yardnique.com)

Signature Green (919) 741-0326

Jack Hester (919) 677-0957 [www.jackhesterlandscapingsupplies.com](http://www.jackhesterlandscapingsupplies.com)

Custom Landscape Services (919) 269-0440 [www.customlandscapesvcs.com](http://www.customlandscapesvcs.com)

Spring Green (919) 782-499 [www.spring-green.com](http://www.spring-green.com)

EPM Lawn Care (919) 467-0660 [www.epmlawncare.com](http://www.epmlawncare.com)

This guide will work no matter what water restrictions the town or other government agencies place on our community. Be sure you follow the town's watering rules! A nice yard with healthy grass enhances that value of your home, and helps keep our neighborhood a great place to live.

Thanks for doing your part.