

# Lawn care made simple

What grass wants: feeding, mowing, watering

By Angel Carpenter  
Blue Mountain Eagle

The sun is out and so are the lawn mowers.

Achieving that lush green yard comes down to a few basics, and OSU Extension Agent Shanna Northway of John Day has some tips to help Grant County residents keep their lawns looking great.

## Feeding the lawn

Northway said there is a balance when it comes to fertilizing lawns.

“Over- and under-fertilization of your lawn can drastically affect the pH of your soil,” she said, adding an inexpensive pH test can be purchased at local hardware stores.

Lawns that are adequately fertilized will look better, compete better against weeds, hold up to wear and tear more easily and recover more quickly from damage.

Northway recommends triple 16 fertilizer, which is available locally. The mix contains 16 percent nitrogen, 16 percent phosphorus and 16 percent potassium.

For the highest visual turf quality for Eastern Oregon lawns, fertilizing in late April and early May, then again in late June and early July, is recommended. In fall, fertilization is suggested in September with optional application in October and early November.

For a medium quality lawn, May and June should suffice, with the same schedule for fall.

How much fertilizing is needed? Each application is assumed to be at 1 lb. nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

Leaving grass clippings on the lawn can enhance the color and growth and extend the effect of fertilizers by recycling the nutrients through decomposition.

## Watering done right

“The biggest mistake is over-irrigation and irrigating



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Grant Union PE students play volleyball Thursday at the school's athletic field.

at the wrong time of day,” Northway said.

Over-irrigating will not allow grass to grow deep roots, she said, and when the root system isn't healthy, grass can become stressed and brown easily during hot days.

Northway suggests watering early in the morning or late at night.

“This allows the water to soak into the ground before it evaporates in the mid-day heat.

Watering three times a week is recommended, but if it's really hot, daily watering may be needed.

Have a hot spot on your lawn?

“Remember, much of our county is built on tailings, so if you have a spot in your lawn that just won't green up chances are there is a lack of top soil in that area,” she said. “You may need to dig up that area and add top soil. If your grass is growing over rocks with little soil, it won't stay green in the heat no matter how much water or fertilizer you pour on it.”

## Giving your lawn a trim

When it comes to mowing lawns, the best outcome will be achieved using sharp blades, and don't mow it too short.

“If your lawn instantly turns yellowish/green after you mow, you are mowing too short and putting your lawn under stress,” North-

way said. “Yes, you will have to mow less often because your grass is stressed and not growing, but if lush and green is what you are going for, raise your (mower) deck up.”

She recommends grass be kept at a height of 1.5-2.5 inches.

## Banishing pesky weeds

To keep weeds and unwanted grasses out of your lawn, Northway suggests a broadleaf lawn spray from the hardware store.

“If your lawn is full of clover, crab grass and dandelions, beware that you may have several brown or dead spots in your lawn as those broadleaves die out,” she said.

Do not apply before an expected rain event or irrigate for 24 hours after making the application, as the herbicides will wash off.

For more information on proper lawn care, call Northway at 541-575-1911 or call your local hardware store.



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David Mauseth mows a lawn in John Day.

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