

Sprucing-Up Lawn Is 3-Step Program

(Editor's Note: The following is the third of three dispatches on gardening.)

By PATRICIA O'CONNOR
United Press International
Washington—(UPI)—You rake away winter's debris and find that old lawn of yours needs perking up. It's a three-step program: preparing the seed-bed, selecting the grass and maintaining it.

Begin spading when the soil is normally moist, not too wet. To find out how acidic the soil is, ask a county agricultural agent or test it yourself with an inexpensive soil testing kit.

You may have to add lime or phosphate to the subsoil for the right degree of acidity. And for the right texture, you may want to add peat or well decomposed manure. It's vital to mix the additive thoroughly.

Just before planting rake an inorganic fertilizer of nitrogen phosphoric acid and potash into the soil. On an average, you'll want two pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

Choose the right grass for your climate, soil and needs.

In general Saint Augustine grass, Bermuda grass and zoysias do best in the South. Bentgrass is good in New England and the Northwest. Kentucky bluegrass is good in the Midwest. But in some areas, a mixture of grasses does best.

When sowing, mix the seed with a little topsoil or sand. Divide this in half and sow one part in one direction and the other half crosswise for good distribution. Cover the seeds by lightly raking. Firm the bed with a light roller. A

thin mulch keeps seeds from washing out.

An organic nitrogen fertilizer gives most uniform nutrition to growing grass. A year's fertilizer is best applied in two or three parts through the year, with half of each dose containing organic nitrogen.

Two tips for fertilizing: never apply it when the grass is wet. But water the lawn after each application.

Don't water your lawn until the grass shows signs of wilt. Then let the water soak at least six inches down. Frequent, light watering only makes for shallow roots.

Most cool season grasses need cutting to about two inches. The shade from the blades helps retard crabgrass. Warm season grasses need

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closer mowing—to about five-eighths of an inch or an inch.

To enrich soil for your flower garden, add rotted manure and a commercial fertilizer. A complete fertilizer is a five-10-five mixture of nitrogen-phosphorous-potash.

Use about one and a half pounds per 100 square feet. Use about one pound of prepared manure per three square feet.

A rule of thumb about planting flower seeds: the smaller the seed the less deeply it's planted. Really tiny seeds like petunia and snapdragon are scratched in with a comb. A light cheesecloth over shallow seeds will help keep them in place for watering. Remove the cloth when shoots appear.

Some perennials require ultra-specialized treatment. But popular types—azalea, rhododendron and chrysanthemum—are easy to grow.

Buy perennials adapted to your area. Put them in well-drained, fertile ground. Azaleas and rhododendrons can take some shade and are most successful if planted when dormant.

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