

Maintaining Healthy Turf

Objective: to explain the principles of maintaining a healthy lawn.

Training Materials: lawn mower, fertilizer, core sampler.

Personal Protective Equipment: work boots, eye protection, hearing protection (while mowing).

Lesson: *A healthy lawn will out compete weed and disease infestation and reduce the need for preventative chemicals. In addition, correct maintenance practices help create a lawn that has a greater tolerance to the effects of heat and drought.*

Steps to healthy turfgrass:

1. Most cool season grasses should be mown to a height of 7.5 cm. Keeping grass on the long side promotes healthy root growth. Cutting grass too short, or removing too much at a time, can weaken or stress the turf - it will grow thinly and weeds can find a foothold in exposed soil surface.
2. Grass should be cut often enough, so that no more than 1/3 of the blade height is removed at one time, for more details, refer to Mowing.
3. A general guideline is that a lawn should receive at least 2.5 cm of water a week. Irrigation rates can be calculated by placing a tin can on the lawn while the sprinklers are operating and timing how long it takes to fill the tin with 2.5 cm of water. Watering less frequently and deeply is much

more effective than sprinkling the grass lightly every other day. Deep watering promotes deep root growth, which creates a lawn that can withstand dry conditions.

4. Fertilize according to the results of a soil test. Fertilizer is usually applied two or three times a year.
5. Aerate and overseed an established lawn once a year (see Aeration). Aeration reduces compaction and improves oxygen and water levels in soil.
6. A core sampler will show the thatch level in the turf and whether the lawn warrants dethatching (see Dethatching).

- *A healthy lawn will out compete weed and disease infestation and reduce the need for preventative chemicals.*

- *Promoting healthy turfgrass is a critical element in the practice of Integrated Pest Management (see IPM 1 and 2).*

