

**INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY**  
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Warmer weather has arrived. The Grundy County 4-H omelet breakfast has come and gone. We received rain. Now, what do I need to do to prepare my lawn for this growing season? This column will review the basic steps to prepare your lawn for the season ahead.

Now is a good time to apply fertilizer to your lawn. It is best to choose fertilizers that contain slow release nitrogen. This will be listed on the bag as sulfur-coated urea, methylene urea, IBDU, triazone or as a natural organic fertilizer. Do not apply more than one pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet. For example, if you are using a fertilizer with an analysis of 20-5-10, you would need to apply five pounds per 1000 square feet (This analysis means the bag contains 20% nitrogen (N), 5% phosphorus (P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>) and 10% potassium (K<sub>2</sub>O); therefore 5 lbs fertilizer times 20% N = 1 pound actual nitrogen).

When you apply fertilizer to your lawn be sure to clean up any that lands on the sidewalk or driveway in order to prevent it from running off into the sewer system. This will help protect our water resources. Runoff from turf grass is minimal.

If you want to seed a lawn this spring or renovate thin areas, it is possible to do but it needs to be done properly. Consider the following points. Take a soil test and incorporate any recommended lime or nutrients. Select the right seed for the site. For sunny areas use one of the improved varieties of Kentucky bluegrass and for shady areas use either a fine fescue or tall fescue but do not mix the fine and tall fescue. Sow 1.5 pounds of Kentucky bluegrass, 6 pounds of tall fescue or 3 pounds of fine leaf fescue per 1000 square feet. Do not seed until later in April because the seed will not germinate until the soil warms to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Consider using a starter fertilizer that contains Tupersan to prevent crabgrass. Use one bale of weed free straw per 1000 square feet to reduce erosion and maintain moisture for germination. Keep the seed bed moist with frequent light irrigation. Always read and follow label directions before applying any fertilizer, herbicide or seed to your lawn.

The need for weed control in the spring depends on the condition of your lawn. If you have a thick stand of turf grass, weed control may not be necessary. However, if your lawn has a history of crabgrass infestation you may want to use a preemergent herbicide just prior to germination. Crabgrass germination normally occurs when soil temperatures reach 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Spring time is not a good time to control dandelions because they are translocating carbohydrates to their leaves. Herbicide applications will burn the shoots but may not destroy the roots.

If you have thatch greater than ½ inch thick you may consider core aerating your lawn which will help thatch to naturally decompose. Core aeration will cause less damage to the grass than power raking.

For additional questions on spring lawn care, please call the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.