

# Spring Home & Garden

2020 Presented by **LAWN DOCTOR**

## Rx for a beautiful lawn

By Beth Doyle  
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Some lawns just inspire envy. You know the ones: a swath of green stretching around the home, beautifully mowed and trimmed, adding curb appeal that's the stuff of dreams.

Understanding the growth process can help determine what needs to be done at certain times of year.

"Right now grass is trying to produce top growth and feed heads," said Tom Norton, the owner of Lawn Doctor, a lawn care company that covers Boston, Metro West, the South Shore and Cape Cod.

Norton explained that the native grasses that make up the lawns in this area are predominantly cool-season grasses like perennial ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue that "wake up" from winter dormancy in early to mid-March and go to seed in early to mid-May, developing a fluffy top that makes them look a lot like weeds.

"A lot of customers are calling thinking they have weeds," Norton said. "Spring is the reproduction period. There's not a lot of root development but there is a lot of top growth so lawns need the most mow-

ing now. It's always good to let the seed get back into the soil. Don't pick up the clippings," he advised.

If the final week of May stays cool, not much will change as far as the stage of growth that lawns have been in during the month.

"Once we get into a little warmer temperatures, we'll see summer annuals - the summer weeds that rear their ugly heads," Norton said, adding that crabgrass will also start to germinate once the temperatures get warmer. "A whole host of weeds that are summer annuals get triggered by higher soil temperatures."

Once those temperatures rise, there is something you can do to discourage the rapid growth of weeds.

"That's the time of year when we encourage our customers to keep their lawns a little longer. It helps to shade the soil and keep the temperature a little lower. When soil warms up too much, it encourages the crabgrass and summer annual weeds to grow," Norton said. "We always tell customers don't cut it shorter than 3 inches. That's the minimum, especially during the warmer temperatures."

### Maintenance

In addition to regular mowing, it's the time of

year to feed your lawn.

"This is definitely an important time to fertilize," Norton said, noting that the cool spring with plenty of rain has helped lawns get more established. "And especially the ones that have been fertilized have developed thick shoots. It bodes well for the rest of the season. The grass is more resilient going into the summer and will tolerate the heat of the summer better."

If your lawn has bare areas, Norton suggests bringing in some top soil to mix with the seed rather than disturbing the soil of your lawn.

### Trouble-shooting

It's always a good idea to keep an eye out for issues.

"Late spring/early summer is the time of year when we tend to see fungus," Norton said. "Most of it is moisture and heat related. The most common is probably Red Thread. The first indication you start to see is plate-sized pink or brown spots over the lawn. That's something that should be looked for. Any type of disease, like spots, needs professional attention. Also, if the lawn is not growing and looks more yellow than it does green."

### Unique approach

The traditional approach to feeding a lawn has been adding a lot of fertilizer, mainly in the form of nitrogen, according to Norton.

"We've gotten away from that," he said. "We take a much more holistic approach to lawn care. We're not just dropping bags of fertilizer on lawns. We're using products that encourage a healthier soil, products with components that build up the soil, like humic acid and soil enzymes. It's more like a soil amendment."

"We look at it from a more horticultural viewpoint. We're focusing on soil nutrition and soil stability and soil sustainability. If it's healthy and rich and there's plenty of organic life in the soil, it will hold up and produce healthier, more beautiful plants."

"These grasses - they are to a certain extent - they're ornamental. They require care, they require nutrition, and obviously mowing. They need to be nurtured. It's a long nurturing process," Norton said.

### Watering tips

• Rule of thumb: water less frequently, more deeply to encourage deeper roots. The deeper the root system, the stronger the plant.



PHOTO/LAWN DOCTOR

A beautiful, healthy lawn is the result of a long nurturing process, according to Tom Norton, the owner of Lawn Doctor, a lawn care company that covers Boston, Metro West, the South Shore and Cape Cod.

• Don't water lightly every day; it will encourage shallow roots.

• Water early mornings. "You want to do it in the early morning, as during the day you lose a lot of water to evaporation. The lawn needs the water during the day," Norton said.

• Don't water at night,

the lawn is not using it. "A wet lawn just encourages fungus diseases," Norton said.

For additional information, visit <https://www.lawndoctor.com/southshore-ma> or call 781-826-2920.



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