

SOUTHWEST TEXAS LAWN & GARDEN TIPS

LAUGHLIN AFB

47 CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON

Watering

Water smartly! Water conservation is an important part of life for people living in arid parts of the country (a.k.a., SW Texas).

- Water early in the morning, preferably before the sun comes up
- When watering your lawn watch your sprinklers and adjust them so you are watering the grass and not the driveway, house, or street
- One indicator that it is time to water is the grass not springing back after a person walks through the yard
- Water deeply and infre-

quently to encourage deeper roots, grass doesn't need water every day

- Water so that the soil is wet to a depth of 4 to 6



inches. To achieve this, you will need to apply 1/2 to 1 inch of water which can be measured in a small can or rain gauge

- To prevent run off into the street it may be necessary to irrigate slowly or in multiple short cycles
- Allow your lawn to dry between waterings, if the ground is still moist the grass doesn't need to be watered
- Don't water in the middle of the day, water will evaporate before it can be absorbed by the grass
- Don't water during strong winds, the wind will prevent the water from hitting the desired areas and will speed up evaporation

Lawn Mowing

- Walk around your yard before mowing pick up any rocks, branches, and toys before you begin
- Mow when the grass is dry
- Mow grass so that no more than 1/3 of the leaf blade is removed at one time
- Don't "scalp" your yard, scalping is cutting the grass almost down to the dirt so you won't have to mow for

a longer period of time

- Cut the grass at the recommended height to keep it healthy and green (recommend a 3 to 4 inch grass height)
- Sharpen mower blades regularly; sharp blades do less damage to grass
- You don't need to bag grass clippings unless disease is present, grass clip-

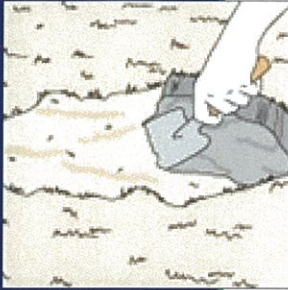
pings provide nutrients your yard needs



- Don't blow clippings into storm drains or streets

How To Re-Seed Bald Spots

This method works for re-seeding the entire lawn too.



1. Remove weeds and dead grass from the spot.
2. If the dead spot is from your dog, fertilizer burn or a spilled substance flush the soil with water before planting.
3. For heavily compacted soil loosen to a depth of 6 inches, if

the soil is generally loose already only a 2 inch depth is needed .

4. Spread about a 1/2-inch layer of compost/potting soil mix on the surface and work in well.
5. Sprinkle the seed over the area and tamp down lightly so that the seed makes contact with the soil.
6. Top the seeded spot

with straw or mulch and water lightly. The soil surface should be kept moist, but not soaked, until the seedlings are growing strongly. Then revert to your normal watering schedule.

7. Lay a wooden board across the repaired spot to make sure the new grass is level with the rest of the lawn.

Fertilizer

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions to prevent over fertilization which can kill the grass. Fertilizers come with specific instructions based on the size of the lawn. Water within 24 hrs of applying Fertilizer.

There are two types of fertilizer: Slow and Fast Release.

SLOW-RELEASE:

- Apply High Nitrogen content fertilizer in the spring (Mar) to stimulate leaf growth
- Apply Low Nitrogen/

High Potassium fertilizer in the fall (Oct) to promote root growth

FAST-RELEASE:

- Can be applied almost all year round, Spring, Early/Late Summer, and Fall

Yard Mix/Repair

- Treat weeds & pests immediately, pull them up by the roots or use weed killer and then pull them out
- Use Buffalo grass (Buchloe dactyloides) or Bermuda (Cynodon dactylon) for re-seeding your yard
- Stay away from St. Augustine grass, it requires excessive watering to keep it green in this region
- You can patch bald spots with seed, sod, or plugs; grass seed is by far the cheapest

option

- The best time to plant grass is late fall (Nov)/early spring (Feb-Mar) this gives it time to become well established before the stress of summer heat

How to Plant Flowers

1. Choose your planting area according to the sun/shade requirements of the plant.
2. **Dig a hole** about twice as large as the size of the flower's pot. Loosen the soil in the ground and the compacted root ball.
3. Place the plant in the center of the hole. Spread a layer of loose dirt around the base of the root ball. Add water, then more soil, repeat until enough soil has been added to the hole to completely cover the root ball. Press down all around the root ball. Cover with soil up to the soil line on the plant.
4. Mulch the plant to a depth of about 2 inches with a good dense mulch, about 2 inches out from the stem to the edge of the outer leaves.
5. Water your plant one more time and then periodically every 3 or 4 days as needed. Check for soil moisture, if still damp you can wait another day. Don't overwater, that can drown the roots.

Plant & Flower FYI's

- Check to make sure your plants are not poisonous to animals or children, a good reference to check is http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/lawn_garden/poison/poison.html
- If you can't plant right away, keep the plants in a lightly shaded spot, water as needed
- It is best to plant on a cloudy or overcast day or late in the day to reduce transplanting shock



Edging

- Check for small rocks or branches, if you hit those while weed whacking you could end up with a broken window, dented vehicle, etc...
- Edge or weed whack around the sidewalk, driveway, curbing, fencing, and A/C unit
- Edge around the base of the chain link fence on both sides
- Edging around the A/C unit keeps air freely circulating and allows the unit to work more efficiently
- Be careful edging around trees the nylon string of a weed whacker can damage the bark of a tree
- To prevent damage mulch around trees, it holds in moisture and protects them from mowers and weed whackers
- Edging is the finishing touch, it gives a yard that pristine "could double as a golf course" look

Resources

Much of the information found in this brochure came from the following websites. There are a lot of useful sites to help you learn about taking care of a lawn and garden no matter what region of the country you move to.

- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/cemap/frame.html>
- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/homelandscapes/flowers/index.html>
- <http://centraltexasgardening.net/database.htm>
- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/earthkind/ekgarden28.html>
- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/archives/parsons/fallgarden/falldirect.html>
- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/elpasoplants/index.html>