

1. Chose the right grass

Choose drought-tolerant grass seeds and spread them on your lawn every fall (over-seed). A thick lawn will crowd out weeds.

2. Mow high

To discourage weeds, keep your lawn mower blade at a height of 7 cm (3 inches). Never cut off more than one-third of the grass stem at a time.

3. Grasscycle

Leave your grass clippings on the lawn to return nutrients to the soil. This will reduce your need for fertilizer by 30 percent. Clippings are mainly water so they add moisture to your lawn.

4. Top-dress and fertilize

Once a year in the fall, use a slow-release granular fertilizer or apply a top layer of natural organic matter such as compost (top-dress).

5. Let your lawn breathe

Once a year, remove small plugs of earth to allow air and water to get to the roots (aerate). A pesticide-free lawn will encourage earthworms, nature's aerators.

6. Water the roots

Let your lawn soak up 2-3 cm (1 inch) of water, once a week, early in the morning, to promote deep root growth. If it has rained, adjust your watering. Use a rain gauge to measure water levels.

7. Remove thatch

Thatch, a thick compacted layer of dead plants and grass, attracts harmful insects. Too much thatch stops water and nutrients from getting to the roots. Remove thatch by gently raking your lawn in late spring or early summer. Aerate. To prevent thatch, don't over water or over fertilize.

8. Develop a tolerance for a few dandelions weeds and insects

Most insects are NOT harmful. Some are important to our environment.

9. Control weeds and insects

Dig out weeds and their roots by hand. Pour boiling water on weeds that are growing between patio stones, etc. Use a stick or your hands to knock insects off plants into a dish of soapy water.

10. Consider alternative plants

Alternatives to grass include trees, shrubs, perennials, ground covers, and wild flowers (native species work best).