

Growing Turf in High Elevations

By Joy Reis: CSU Extension, Colorado Master Gardener Apprentice and
Mark J. Platten, CSU Extension Director, Teller County

Summer is finally here! Imagine a beautiful, sunny day running barefoot through a nice lush lawn...wait we live in Teller County, no one has a lawn here. Right? Wrong. It is possible to grow a beautiful, thick lawn and yes, you can do it.

Lawns require good soil, water, fertilizer, and little TLC (thick lawn care). Aerate your lawn at least once a year. If you missed aerating in the spring, you have one more chance in September. Aeration removes plugs of thatch and soil 2 to 3 inches long and deposits them on the lawn. The ideal aeration spacing is 2 inches between holes which may take several passes to achieve.

Water:

Water is key to a successful lawn, but when and how much you water is even more important. The most efficient time of day to water is between 10 p.m. and midnight, or 8 and 9 a.m. Contrary to popular belief, watering at night does not encourage disease development. The rule of thumb for watering an established lawn is, “water as deeply and as infrequently as possible.” Deep and infrequent irrigation stimulates root growth, resulting in healthy, drought tolerant, and pest resistant turf. If the water pools, water the next section and come back to the first area again. Most lawns will require 1-1/4” per week of moisture in June, and 1-1/2” per week in July & August.

Most lawns in Colorado are Kentucky Blue Grass (KBG) and are known for their very strong rhizome root structure that spread, or fill in, quickly. All turf needs watering in the winter months and many lawns did not survive the extremely dry winter. Water only when the outside temperature is 40 degrees, or above, and there is no snow cover.

Fertilizer:

You should fertilize your lawn at least once in the spring, summer and fall. Nitrogen is the most important nutrient for promoting good turf color and growth. Do not over stimulate the turf with excess N, especially during the spring and summer. Over fertilization can contribute to thatch buildup and increased mowing requirements.

Mowing:

The two most important facets of mowing are mowing height and frequency. The preferred height for all species is 2.5 to 3 inches.

Mow often enough so no more than 1/3 of the grass height is removed at any single mowing. This may mean mowing a bluegrass or fescue lawn every three to four days during the active

spring growth period, but only once every seven to 10 days at other times of the year when growth is slowed by heat, drought, or cold.

Let grass clippings fall back onto the lawn while mowing. They decompose quickly, provide a source of recycled nutrients, and do not contribute to thatch accumulation.

For questions regarding produce, landscape, and horticulture questions; please contact the Teller County, Colorado Master Gardener grow line at 686-7980, visit our website at www.co.teller.co.us/csu or visit our booth at the Woodland Park farmers' market.