

The Perfect Lawn

The definition of the "Perfect Lawn" is as individual as you. For some, the perfect lawn resembles an area rug in the yard, or no lawn at all, having been replaced by a ground cover planting, mulch, or a paved sitting area. For others, the lawn must be as pristine as a putting green, while some find a lawn peppered with the flowers of henbit, clover and dandelions to be beautiful. Each version of a lawn reflects the personality of its caretaker and all are the "Perfect Lawn" that fits the owners' needs.

The most popular lawns in Shelby County, TN tend to be a broad expanse of a monoculture grass covering the majority of the property. Such lawns are relatively high maintenance during the summer months requiring weekly mowing, edging and watering to maintain their appearance.

The decision as to which grass variety to plant is determined in part by the primary purpose of the lawn, beautification of the landscape, control of erosion or a play area for sports.

Additionally the amount of sunlight available plays a key role in choosing the grass variety.

Grasses Most Suitable For Memphis

	<i>Bermuda</i>	<i>Zoysia</i>	<i>Centipede</i>	<i>Tall Fescue</i>
Grass Season	Warm	Warm	Warm	Cool
Shade Tolerance	Poor	Fair	Fair	Good
Maintenance Level	Moderate to High	Low to Moderate	Low	Moderate to high
Leaf Texture	Medium	Medium to Fine	Course	Medium to Fine
Mowing height	1 ½" to 2 ½"	2" to 3"	1 ½" to 2"	2" to 3"
Wear Tolerance	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Good
Drought Tolerance	Excellent	Good	Fair	Fair

Fertilization: When applying fertilizers and pesticides to your lawn be sure to follow the label directions for best results. Do not over apply as higher use levels will not provide added benefits and could result in damage to your lawn. Be aware that materials that land on pavement will wash into our streams and lakes which is harmful to their health. The higher levels of chemical fertilizer use in maintaining a pristine lawn can result in a shift in soil pH from optimal levels. Therefore, it is recommended that you test your soil if you have not done so recently. A soil test kit can be obtained from the Shelby County Extension office. The report will show your fertility levels and how to correct for pH if necessary.

Fertilizer Application Date (Warm Season Grasses)	Nitrogen rate per 1,000 sq. ft.	Phosphorus and Potassium per 1,000 sq. ft.
April 15 (Tax Day)	1 lb.	2 oz.
June 1 (Memorial Day)	1 lb.	2 oz.
July 15 (4 th of July)	1 lb.	2 oz.
September 1 (Labor Day)	1 lb.	2 oz.
Total annual application	4 lb.	1/2 lb.

Mowing: Frequency is determined by the plants growth, not the calendar. Do not remove more than one third of the grass blade in any mowing. Heavily fertilized lawns therefore will require significantly more mowing. Frequent proper mowing with a mulching mower will allow you to leave the clippings on your lawn. The bits of grass will act to inhibit weed germination and as they decompose they feed the lawn without resulting in a build-up of thatch which in turn allows for less chemical fertilizer use.

Weed Control: Many of our weeds are annuals that germinate from seed each year. There are two primary ways to control weeds. Preemergents control weeds by preventing the weed seed from germinating but will have no effect on plants that are growing.

Preemergence	Spring application Feb 15 – April 15	Fall application Sep 1 – Oct 15
Postemergence	Warm season grasses May 1 – July 15	Cool season grasses Oct 15 – March 1

To control weeds that have begun active growth, a postemergent herbicide is required.

For more lawn information visit: memphisareamastergardeners.org

