

## **Summertime Lawn Care**

This is the most difficult time of year for cool season grasses like Kentucky Bluegrass and Tall Fescue. During the intense heat and dry conditions of July and August, different lawn care guidelines should be used to keep your lawn in the best possible shape. The first thing you can do to help your lawn through the hot, dry summer months is raise the mowing height to 2.5- 3 inches for Kentucky Bluegrass lawns and 3-3.5 inches for Tall Fescue lawns. Mowing the grass higher creates a taller canopy of grass which in turn shades the crown of the plant and keeps it cooler. All the plant's new growth originates from the crown so it is wise to protect this area and keep it as healthy as possible.

Cool season grasses like Kentucky Bluegrass and Tall Fescue slow down their growth during the hot summer months and this affects their need for and use of fertilizers. It is not recommended to fertilize your lawn at all during July and August for Kentucky Bluegrass or Tall Fescue lawns. Fertilizing cool season grasses during this period of hot summer weather will encourage weed growth and cause the turf to be more susceptible to high temperature stress and disease problems.

Your lawn's watering schedule should be tailored to the existing summer conditions and rain frequency. Lawns should receive 1.5 inches of water per week from July to August, either as rain or sprinkler irrigation. If you have to irrigate, use deep infrequent waterings rather than frequent shallow applications. This means only two or three deep waterings, ½ inch each, throughout the week for a total of 1.5 inch. Daily shallow watering is strongly discouraged because they encourage weak, shallow rooting and increased disease problems.

Additional information on the care of cool season lawns, check out the following University of Nebraska- Lincoln publications: Kentucky Bluegrass Lawn Calendar at <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/g517.pdf> and Tall Fescue Lawn Calendar at <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/g558.html>.