

Lawn Care Calendar

St. Augustinegrass

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These suggested maintenance practices will help you care for your lawn throughout the year. Because every site is different due to variations in location, terrain, soil type, condition of lawn, previous lawn care and other factors, adjust these practices and dates to suit your home lawn.

St. Augustinegrass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*) is a fast-growing grass that has a medium to dark green color and coarse leaf texture. With proper maintenance, it will provide a dense, lush cover. As a warm-season grass, it is best adapted to warm, humid areas that are not exposed to excessive or intense periods of cold weather. St. Augustinegrass generally grows best in fertile, well-drained soils. It has excellent tolerance to shade and has exhibited good salt, heat and, to a moderate extent, drought tolerance. St. Augustinegrass is not tolerant of heavy traffic or cold weather. When the temperature drops to 10°F or below for several hours, St. Augustinegrass may be injured. St. Augustinegrass is best suited to the southern one-third of Arkansas.

There are a large number of St. Augustinegrass lawns in the older sections of Little Rock. St. Augustinegrass survival in Little Rock is aided by the “urban heat island” effect. The air in a city can be 2-8°F hotter than surrounding areas. This occurs because in urban areas, there are fewer trees and other natural vegetation to shade buildings, block solar radiation and cool the air by evapotranspiration – the evaporation of water from the surfaces of leaves and the soil. In addition, roof and paving materials with low reflectivity absorb

more of the sun’s rays, causing both surface temperature and overall ambient air temperature in an urban area to rise.

St. Augustinegrass seed is not available, so it can only be planted as sod, sprigs or plugs. ‘Raleigh’ is the most cold tolerant St. Augustinegrass cultivar currently grown in Arkansas and should be used in areas where winterkill is a concern. For more information on locating St. Augustinegrass cultivars, see the *Arkansas Sod Source Directory*, FSA6136.

Since it is fast growing, St. Augustinegrass requires frequent mowing during the growing period. It should never receive more than 3 pounds of nitrogen per thousand square feet in one year. At high rates of fertilization and irrigation, thatch buildup may be a problem. In turn, buildup of thatch can lead to other problems, such as disease and insect damage.

Chinch bugs are often a problem, causing leaves to rapidly begin to wilt and turn brown. Yellow spots are often associated with chinch bug activity. In addition, brown patch can be a nuisance, creating brown circular patches up to several feet in diameter that usually warrant treatment. If brown patch appears, reducing or eliminating nitrogen fertilization for a couple of seasons may help control the disease.

St. Augustinegrass is sensitive to some postemergence herbicides, such as 2,4-D and MSMA; however, some herbicides can be used at lower rates. Read and follow label directions carefully.

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St. Augustinegrass maintenance calendar.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Watering†				●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Mowing				●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
Fertilization					●	●	●	●	●			
Liming		●	●	●	●				●	●	●	●
Aeration				●	●	●	●	●	●			
Dethatching				●	●	●	●	●				
Seeding (no seed available)												
Sodding		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Weed control												
Preemergence-crabgrass	●	●	●	●								
Postemergence-broadleaf			●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Postemergence-sedges				●	●	●	●	●				
Postemergence-winter annuals											●	●

† Bullets represent the optimum time period to perform various maintenance practices to your St. Augustinegrass lawn. The optimum lawn maintenance period may be started earlier or extended based on variations in annual weather conditions and/or location in Arkansas. Dark bullets represent the best months for each practice, and lightly shaded bullets represent possible months.

	March Through May
Mowing	Begin mowing when the grass turns green in the spring. Low mowing in early spring before your lawn begins actively growing is damaging to St. Augustinegrass lawns since they spread by aboveground stems (stolons) and are more prone to injury from this scalping practice. St. Augustinegrass should be mowed at 2.5 to 4.0 inches. Mow often to avoid removing more than one-third of the leaf blade. It isn't necessary to collect clippings unless they remain as clumps on the lawn surface. Mowing more frequently to avoid clipping buildup is more efficient than emptying the collection bag. For more information about mowing, see <i>Mowing Your Lawn</i> , FSA6023.
Fertilizing	Apply 0.5 pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet approximately three weeks after the grass turns green in May. Submit a soil sample to determine phosphorus and potassium requirements, if you haven't already (contact your county Extension office). Apply lime if suggested. Do not apply more than 3 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year. For more information about fertilization, see <i>Fertilizing Your Lawn</i> , FSA2114. For more information about soil pH in lawns, see <i>Liming Your Lawn</i> , FSA6134. To determine the amount of fertilizer product required to apply 0.5 pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet, divide 0.5 by the first number (%) in the fertilizer ratio. For example, for a 20-5-5 fertilizer (containing 20% nitrogen), divide 0.5 by 0.20 (NOTE: 20% = 0.20). The result is 2.5 pounds of product per thousand square feet. For more information on calculating the amount of fertilizer you need to apply, see <i>Fertilizing Your Lawn</i> , FSA2114.
Watering	Irrigation is seldom needed on St. Augustinegrass during the spring except for newly sodded areas or if dry, hot, windy conditions occur for an extended period. A dark, bluish gray color, foot-printing and wilted, folded or curled leaves indicate it is time to water. Proper irrigation may prevent or reduce pest problems and environmental stress later in the summer.
Weed Control	If crabgrass and goosegrass have been a problem, apply preemergence herbicides by March 1. Control broadleaf weeds as necessary with postemergence herbicides. St. Augustinegrass is sensitive to certain herbicides (2,4-D and MSMA), so follow label directions and use caution. Manor or Blade (metsulfuron) is an excellent broadleaf herbicide which will not damage St. Augustinegrass when used properly. It is not readily available to homeowners and may require a professional application. SedgeHammer (halosulfuron) may be used for sedge control in St. Augustinegrass. See FSA2109, <i>Home Lawn Weed Control</i> , for more weed control information.

March Through May (cont.)	
Disease Control	If you find brown, circular patches of grass up to several feet in diameter, you may have large patch. Achieving control of large patch with fungicides is difficult. A better approach is to improve drainage and air movement and reduce nitrogen fertilization and irrigation. Reduce nitrogen fertilization to a minimum and avoid overwatering if large patch is a problem in your lawn. See FSA7527, <i>Rhizoctonia Large Patch Disease of Zoysiagrass and Bermudagrass</i> , for more disease control information. Gray leaf spot also may be a problem in St. Augustinegrass lawns. If your St. Augustinegrass is abnormally yellow in the spring and has a chlorotic (yellow) mottle or mosaic pattern, it could have a virus called St. Augustinegrass decline. Take a sample to your local Cooperative Extension office for help in the identification of this disease.
Insect Control	Check for insect pests and treat if necessary. If drought symptoms or yellow spots occur in a sunny location, check for chinch bug activity. Push a coffee can (with both top and bottom removed) into the ground and fill it with water. Any chinch bugs present will float. Treat or hire a professional to treat your lawn for chinch bugs if you have 15 or more chinch bugs per square foot.
Renovation	Replant large bare areas in late May using sod or plugs planted on 6- or 12-inch centers.
June Through August	
Mowing	St. Augustinegrass should be mowed every 5 to 7 days and less often when the lawn is drought stressed.
Fertilizing	Apply 0.5-1.0 pound of nitrogen per thousand square feet in late June or early July and repeat in mid-August. Do not apply more than 3 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year.
Watering	Water early in the morning to wet the soil to a depth of 4 to 6 inches. Probe with a screwdriver to determine moisture depth. St. Augustinegrass needs a weekly application of 1 to 1.25 inches of water to retain its color during summer. However, St. Augustinegrass can survive weeks without irrigation or rainfall. On sandy soils, it requires more frequent watering: for example, 0.5 inch of water every third day. It is often necessary to irrigate an area for three to five hours to apply 1 inch of water with most homeowner irrigation systems. (It takes 620 gallons of water to apply 1 inch of water per thousand square feet.) Because clay soils accept water slowly, irrigate these areas until runoff occurs; wait one-half hour until the water has been absorbed, and then continue irrigating until the desired depth or amount is obtained. A dark, bluish gray color, foot-printing and wilted, folded or curled leaves indicate it is time to water. Proper irrigation may prevent or reduce pests and other problems.
Cultivation	Heavy clay soils or heavily trafficked sections of lawn may benefit from aerification. Check thatch depth and control with a power rake with 3-inch blade spacing or through aerification if thatch exceeds 0.75 inch. Cultivation during the early summer is preferred since moisture is usually not limiting and growth is optimum for recovery. For more information about thatch, see <i>Thatch Prevention and Control</i> , FSA6139.
Insect Control	Check for insect pests and treat if necessary. If drought symptoms or yellow spots occur in a sunny location, check for chinch bug activity. Push a coffee can (with both top and bottom removed) into the ground and fill it with water. Any chinch bugs present will float. Treat for chinch bugs if you have 15 or more chinch bugs per square foot.
Weed Control	Apply postemergence herbicides to control summer annual and perennial broadleaf weeds, such as knotweed, spurge and lespedeza. Since St. Augustinegrass is sensitive to certain herbicides (2,4-D and MSMA), follow label directions and use with caution. Do not apply herbicides unless weeds are actively growing and the lawn is not under drought stress. If crabgrass and goosegrass are present, make a note to apply a preemergence herbicide next spring.
Disease Control	Check for gray leaf spot and large patch.
Renovation	Replant large bare areas in late May using sod or plugs planted on 6- or 12-inch centers.
September Through November	
Mowing	St. Augustinegrass should be mowed every 5 to 7 days and less often when the lawn is drought stressed.
Fertilizing	Do not fertilize. Apply lime if a soil test recommends.
Watering	Follow the March through May irrigation guidelines. Dormant St. Augustinegrass may still need to be watered periodically when dry, windy conditions occur for an extended period. Additionally, newly planted sod should be watered during this period to prevent desiccation.
Disease Control	Check for large patch.
Weed Control	If crabgrass and goosegrass are present, plan to apply a preemergence herbicide next spring.

December Through February	
Mowing	Pick up debris (rocks, sticks, leaves, etc.) from lawn. Do not try to remove excess debris by burning. This could injure the lawn and is a fire hazard.
Fertilizing	Do not fertilize. Submit soil samples for analysis every 2-3 years to determine your lawn's nutrient requirements. Be sure to specify your lawn species.
Watering	Newly planted sod should be watered during this period to prevent desiccation.
Weed Control	Apply broadleaf herbicides to control chickweed, henbit, etc. St. Augustinegrass is sensitive to certain postemergence herbicides like 2,4-D and MSMA, so follow label directions for reducing rates, and use with caution. Selective herbicides like atrazine and simazine can be applied in November or December to control annual bluegrass and several winter annual broadleaf weeds such as henbit. Read the label and follow directions carefully.

Additional Information

Additional fact sheets available at <http://www.uaex.edu>

Additional information about turfgrass management available at <http://turf.uark.edu>

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