



**Go Green Northbrook** is a non-affiliated, grassroots organization composed of residents of Northbrook, IL. Our mission is to bring about initiatives and education in our community that promote environmental consciousness, outdoor enthusiasm, and a healthy, sustainable approach to living. We are a group for anyone willing to make an effort — small or large — towards encouraging and leading an environmentally thoughtful life.

## LAWN CARE / URBAN FOREST & ECOSYSTEM TEAM

### WATERING

Generally, grass requires one inch of water a week, depending on the conditions it is growing in; sun, shade, wind, etc. If we get enough rainfall, this will suffice. If not, you may want to consider supplemental watering. How and when you water is very important. If you have an irrigation system, your service will set the heads to get the maximum turf coverage. You may have to adjust the timer for the proper frequency, duration and time of day that the sprinkler system operates:

1. The sprinkler system should only come on when we do not get adequate moisture from rainfall. If your system has a sensor, it will turn itself off automatically. Otherwise, you must do this manually. Remember, too much water is as bad as too little.
2. Your system should only come on once or twice a week and run long enough to deeply soak the soil in each zone. The grass should have a chance to dry between waterings. Light, frequent waterings encourage shallow root systems. This makes them more susceptible to drought, forces you to water more often and makes turf more prone to disease. Long, deep irrigation encourages deep root systems. Grass with deep roots is more resistant to disease and is able to tap into underground water supplies plus the lawn can go longer between waterings.
3. Water early in the day; this means before noon. This reduces evaporation and the wasting of water. It is also believed that you should avoid having wet grass when it gets dark because a wet lawn in a dark, relatively cool environment can lead to development of certain diseases.

Something to consider is that natural lawns grow slower and require less water.

### CORE-AERATION

In the Chicagoland area, the majority of lawns have clay soil. By its nature, clay tends to be compacted, that means the soil particles are very small, closely packed together with not much pore space for air and water. Add to that the compaction that occurs due to heavy use and you have an environment that is not conducive to healthy turf.

Core-aeration is one process that is very beneficial in relieving this condition. By removing the 4-6 inch plugs of soil, this creates space for air and water to penetrate the soil. When water can soak deeper into the soil, this allows for deeper root growth which leads to healthier grass. The soil in the plugs that are removed contain micro-organisms that help to break down thatch.

### RE-SEEDING and OVERSEEDING

This is an area that is often forgotten in a traditional lawn care program. While there are millions of weed seeds in the soil, there are not many grass seeds. We mow the grass before it has a chance to form seed-heads. Since the natural way of weed control includes out-competing the weeds, grass seeds must be introduced to the lawn. There are opportunities to do seeding; after core-aeration and de-thatching, in the spring and fall. The best time is the fall and that is when we do seeding.

### MOWING

Proper mowing is very important to having a healthy lawn. The first thing that should be done at the beginning of the growing season is to sharpen the mower blade. Dull blades tear the grass instead of cutting it and can lead to disease. Another thing to keep in mind is to never remove more than 1/3 of the blade at any mowing. Mowing too low causes shock to the lawn. It is also important not to scalp the grass. Mowing in this manner can lead to various lawn diseases. Except for the first and last mowing of the year, which are done at 2 inches, the mowing height should be 3 inches for cool season grasses. Mowing high leads to deeper roots which makes the turf more drought resistant.

A common misconception is that grass clippings contribute to thatch. This is not correct; in fact, a healthy lawn will break down grass clippings which then add moisture and organic matter back to the soil. Leaving your grass clippings on your lawn will account for ¼ to ½ of your lawn's fertilizer needs for the year. Usually, the only time to bag your clippings is the first and last mowing of the year.

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