



Sussex  
conservation  
district

PREPARE. PROTECT. PRESERVE.

# TURFGRASS FACT SHEET



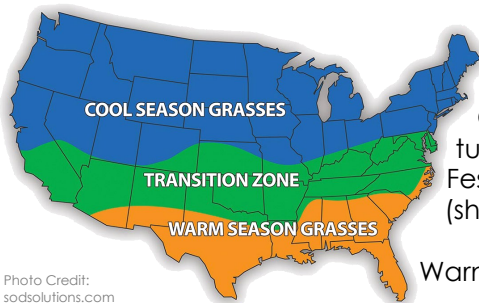
Your lawn is like a puzzle. Put together all the pieces and you can realize the lawn of your dreams while protecting the environment.

## CULTIVAR SELECTION

Delaware is in the transitional zone, which means having a healthy, green lawn year-round can be a challenge.

Warm season grasses don't like the cold winters and cool season grasses don't like the hot summers.

Color, drought tolerance, disease and insect resistance are just a few of the many factors to consider when selecting turfgrass. Decide which features are important to you, then speak with a turf specialist to select the best options for your unique situation.



Turfgrass for Delaware:

Cool season: Kentucky Blue Grass, Tall Fescue, Fine Fescue (shaded areas)

Warm season: Zoysia

Photo Credit: sodsolutions.com

## SOIL QUALITY

Healthy soils resist disease, have better nutrient and water holding capacity.

The lawn of a newly constructed home may suffer from a lack of top soil or compacted soils which can lead to several issues. Adding compost to these lawns can increase the soil quality and long-term viability of plants and turfgrass.

If you're experiencing issues, a soil test may be recommended.

For more information visit, [www.delawarelivablelawns.org](http://www.delawarelivablelawns.org).



Photo Credit: Canva.com

## GROWTH CYCLES

Cool season grasses need strong spring roots to survive summer; warm season grasses need strong summer roots to survive winter.

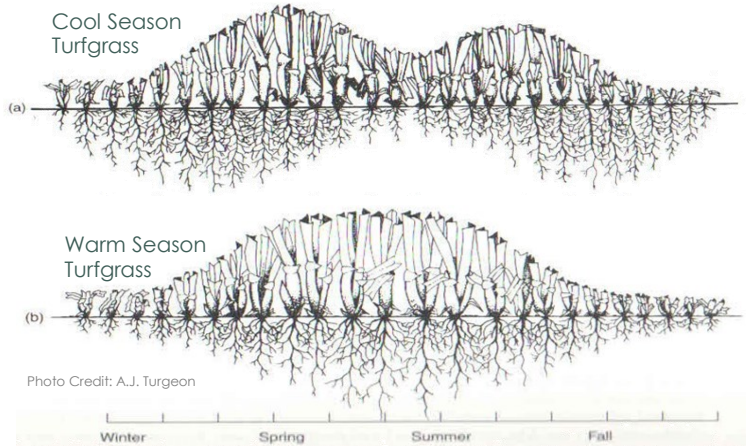


Photo Credit: A.J. Turgeon

## WATER REQUIREMENTS

Water is a natural resource that must be conserved.

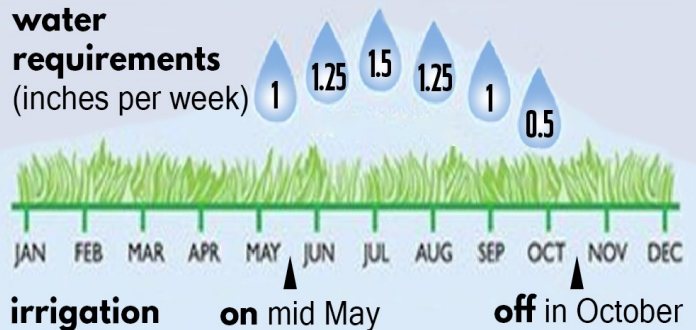
Your irrigation may not need to run as often as you think. Deep, infrequent watering promotes healthy root structure.

Check for signs of drought stress in your lawn and the weather forecast; adjust your irrigation as needed. Use a rain gauge to determine if your lawn has received adequate moisture naturally.



Photo Credit: cristina.sarvito via flickr

### water requirements (inches per week)



Help save Delaware's rivers and bays one lawn at a time!

[www.delawarelivablelawns.org](http://www.delawarelivablelawns.org)

## MOWING

Taller grass has deeper roots, is able to withstand stress and retains soil moisture.

Follow the 1/3 rule, remove the top third of the blade at any single mowing. For 3" grass, mow when 4.5" tall.

- Mowing is a form of stress.
- Keep blades sharp to reduce stress
- Mulch clippings for healthy soil
- Mowing height depends on the time of year and type of turf.



## AERATION

Your lawn needs to breathe.

Steel spike or core aerators create holes which improves drainage and increase available oxygen. Aeration can alleviate compaction and enhance your lawn.

Tip: Never aerate a dormant lawn.

Thatch is a build up of organic matter between soil and turfgrass. A thin layer of thatch, less than 1/2" thick, is beneficial since it can act as a natural mulch. Thatch over 1/2" thick can inhibit water and nutrients from reaching roots.



Photo Credit: Chris Lemcke

Mulched clippings do not cause thatch, but actually benefit your lawn and soil.

## FERTILIZER

DO NOT over fertilize your lawn.

A soil test will determine your lawns specific needs.

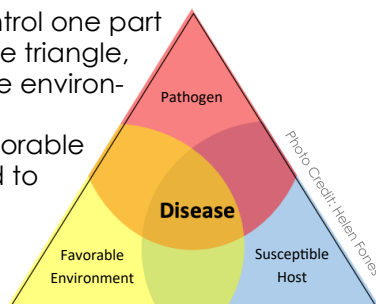
The numbers on the fertilizer bag refer to amount of Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium, N-P-K. Read and apply fertilizer according to the package directions and always calibrate your spreader. Excess fertilizer can harm your lawn and nearby waterways.

Tip: Apply fertilizer in the fall to give roots a boost over winter. Always consider using slow-release fertilizers.

## DISEASE TRIANGLE

You can control one part of the disease triangle, the favorable environment.

Overwatering provides a favorable environment which can lead to disease if a pathogen and susceptible host are present. Blends of turf grasses can reduce fungal outbreaks.



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## DROUGHT STRESS

Your lawn will tell you when it needs water but you should also keep an eye on the forecast.



Photo Credit: <http://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Conserve water by waiting to run irrigation until your lawn is showing signs of drought stress including:

- Foot printing
- Leaf rolling, folding or wilting
- Discoloration (blue-gray/silver)

## IRRIGATION TIPS

Be part of the solution and take control of your irrigation system.

Adjust your irrigation system as needed.

Don't set it and forget it!

Overwatering drowns roots and prevents oxygen from reaching soil, making the plant susceptible to disease.

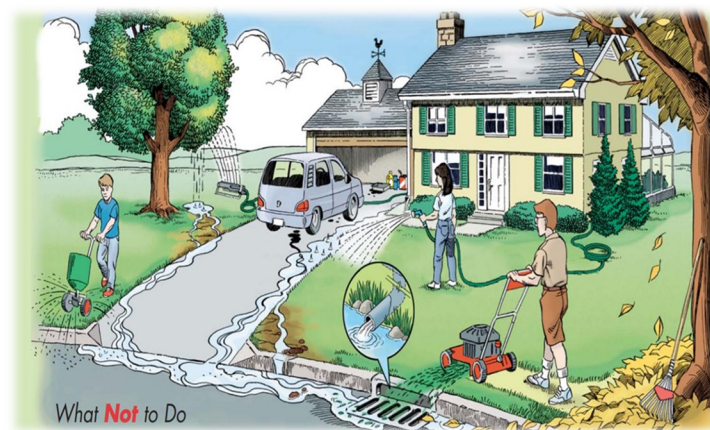
Overwatering impacts nearby waterways, increasing runoff or nonpoint source pollution.

Repair leaky valves and test your irrigation system for proper coverage to be sure water is not running down the driveway, sidewalk or road.

Use smart controllers and moisture meters to adjust watering frequency automatically.

Winterizing your system to prevent pipes from bursting.

Run irrigation in the morning instead of at night, evening watering can make turf susceptible to disease by prolonging periods of leaf wetness.



Nonpoint Source Pollution—many homeowners unknowingly pollute waterways.

Photo Credit: F. Rossi Cornell

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