

SPRING LAWN CARE

Liming

Calcium in the form of limestone is an essential nutrient for building strong cell walls, which are the building blocks of all plants. Stronger cell walls equal a healthier, stress-free plant.

Why apply lime: Coastal soils are very acidic and low in magnesium (the rainfall leaches out this important nutrient). When soils are low in magnesium, other nutrients in the soil are unavailable to the plant.

When to lime: Spring and fall, two weeks prior to fertilizing or seeding. For chronically acidic soils (such as the West Coast) one to two additional applications are an option.

Types of lime: Prilled Dolomite (Dolopril) at the rate of 50#/4000 sq. ft. Works rapidly in about 3 weeks.

Coarse Dolomite at the rate of 55#/2000 sq. ft. Works in about 3 months.

Lawn & Garden Lime (powdered) at the rate of 55#/2000 sq. ft. works in about 3 months. Does not contain magnesium.

Definitions:

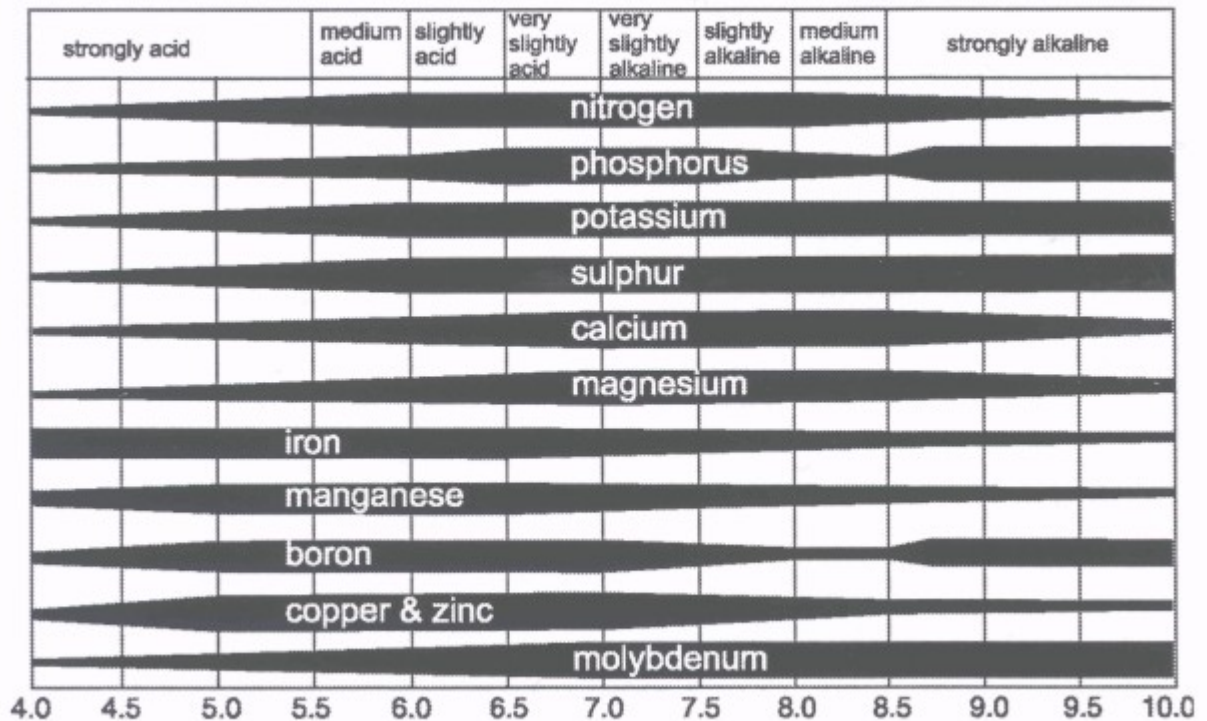
Lime is the term used for crushed limestone. It is naturally mined as rock and crushed mechanically to varying degrees of fineness. In most cases, lime is comprised primarily of calcium carbonate, also called calcite.

Some limestones may contain relatively high (5% to 12%) amounts of magnesium carbonate, as well as calcium carbonate. These materials are called **dolomites**. A soil test is recommended to determine the need for magnesium and for testing soil pH.

Soil pH is a measure of the concentration of hydrogen ions. The lower the pH, the more acidic the soil; the higher the pH, the more alkaline (sweet) the soil. A neutral pH is around the 6.7 to 7.0 range.

The following chart shows the availability of nutrients at various pH levels. The wider the bar, the more available the nutrient at that pH level.

Chart of the Effect of Soil pH on Nutrient Availability



Moss Control

When to apply: Spring and fall, when weather is cool and damp.

Why control: Moss can take over a lawn and rob nutrients from turf. It’s also unattractive.

How to control: Apply lime (prilled lime works fastest) 3 weeks before applying moss control. Moss grows well in acidic soil, so by raising the pH it is more difficult for moss to survive and the moss is weakened. Two to three weeks after liming, apply BC Brand Dogwood 9-3-6 granular fertilizer. This product contains 13.5% ferrous sulphate (iron) which is toxic to moss, but greens up turf and supplies the plant with primary nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and potash). The granular 9-3-6 offers moss control over several weeks. Another option for rapid, short term

control is liquid Country Green 5-0-0 Moss Away. This is convenient to use in a hose end sprayer and requires no mixing.

When moss is dead (it will turn black) it should be raked out and the lawn overseeded .

Fertilization:

A balanced lawn fertilizer should complement a lawn's growth phase and act like a multivitamin.

When to fertilize: Four times per year is sufficient. Early spring, late spring, summer and fall.

Why fertilize: Soils become depleted of nutrients over time.

Types of fertilizers: For quick spring green-up during cooler weather, BC Brand Dogwood 9-3-6 with moss control. During spring and summer, Country Green 32-4-8 with stabilized nitrogen, or Earthlink All Natural/Organic 8-2-5 Lawn Food. For fall and winter, BC Brand Dogwood 4-9-15 or Country Green 15-0-30 with stabilized nitrogen.

Why use slow release, stabilized nitrogen?

The risk of burning the lawn is low, even though the percentage of nitrogen in a product can be high. The nitrogen is released over a slow period of time, while the lawn has constant access to food. The use of stabilized nitrogen results in less loss to the air (a process called volatilization) and won't leach into the soil, where it can get into groundwater. This results in a healthier, greener and stronger lawn. Lack of nitrogen leads to a weak, thin lawn that is easily taken over by weeds.

Organic lawn fertilizers as an alternative

Organic fertilizers typically have a low N-P-K (nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium) analysis and do not have as an immediate effect as synthetic fertilizers as they rely on soil microbes to break them down before the nutrients become available to plants. You could say synthetic fertilizers feed the plants, whereas organic fertilizers feed the soil that feeds the plant. However, organic fertilizers play a much broader role than just providing nutrients. By encouraging beneficial soil microbes, these microscopic garden helpers also change unavailable nutrients in the soil into plant-usable forms, helps to break down clay soils and build humus. The repeated use of organic fertilizers helps build a solid base for nurturing plants. Earthlink Lawn Food 8-2-5 is 100% natural and organic, and can be used later in the year than conventional fertilizers as it won't create a growth surge that can be damaged by an early frost. The bonus is that the phosphorus source comes from guano, not bonemeal, so dogs will be less tempted to dig.

Steps to planting a new lawn

The best time to seed a new lawn or renovate an existing lawn is early fall, as the soil is warm which results in rapid seed germination. The next best time is spring, while rain is steady and hot days haven't set in.

1. Amend soil with topsoil, sand, gypsum, etc. as needed. Level area.
2. Apply prilled lime and starter fertilizer (Country Green 16-32-6) and work into top 2 inches.
3. Apply appropriate seed at 5-7 pounds/1000 sq. ft.
4. Lightly rake or roll area to firm seed/sod into soil.
5. Keep soil moist and mow when 2-3" high.

*When using turf, do steps 1 and 2, apply turf, then follow step 4 & 5.

Steps to renovate lawn

1. Aerate to relieve soil compaction and eliminate thatch. A lawn high in thatch will feel spongy underfoot.
2. Rake or sweep lawn to remove clippings and debris.
3. Apply prilled lime and starter fertilizer.

4. Overseed with a quality perennial ryegrass such as Country Green Overseeder at a rate of 5-7 pounds per 1000 sq. ft. Spread in two directions at right angles for a more even application.
5. Lightly roll area to firm seed into soil.
6. Keep soil moist and mow when 2-3" high.

What is thatch?

Thatch is a tightly compressed interlaced layer of undecomposed plant matter somewhat resembling compressed peat moss. It is located between the grass blades and the soil surface. A thick layer can interfere with the proper watering and feeding of the lawn.

What is Red Thread?

Red thread and pink patch are diseases that attack Kentucky bluegrass, fescues, ryegrass and bent grass, all commonly used types of lawn seed for the West Coast. These diseases are active during the cool, moist periods of the year, causing distinct or irregular discolored patches in lawns. The leaves often become covered with a pink, fibrous growth. In the final stage, reddish fungal threads are found at the leaf tips. In a lawn infested with red thread or pink patch, pink areas from two to fifteen inches in diameter become readily apparent. These spots may join to form large areas of damaged turf. Areas may turn brown and dry out. These diseases are most common under the combination of prolonged periods of high humidity, temperatures between 60 and 70 degrees F, and slow growing, nitrogen deficient turf.