

**Lawn Care Calendar**

# Tall Fescue

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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.*

Tall fescue is a moderate-to-coarse-bladed, heavy-duty grass that tolerates a wide range of soil and shade conditions and has good heat, drought and wear tolerance. Tall fescue has few serious pest problems

but is subject to brown patch disease under warm, wet conditions. Tall fescue grows rapidly and requires frequent mowing but does not tolerate a close cut. It is a bunch-grass that does not recover well from injury and thus must be reseeded if bare areas appear. New cultivars referred to as turf-type tall fescues have been developed. These cultivars are more shade-tolerant and finer-leaved than the standard K-31 variety. Tall fescue can be grown throughout the state, but does best in the northern tier of counties.

<b>March Through May</b>	
<b>Mowing</b>	Mow lawn to 3 inches in height. Mow at least once a week. Mow before grass gets above 5 inches tall. Leave grass clippings on the lawn unless they are dense enough to block sunlight.
<b>Fertilization</b>	Do not fertilize tall fescue after March 15.
<b>Watering</b>	Water as needed to prevent drought. About 1 inch of water per application each week is adequate. Sandy soils often require more frequent watering, or about 1/2 inch of water every third day.
<b>Weed Control</b>	Apply preemergence herbicides to control crabgrass. Apply from late February to early March. See FSA 2109, <i>Home Lawn Weed Control</i> , for more weed control information.
<b>Insect Control</b>	Check for white grubs in April and May and control if necessary.
<b>Thatch Removal</b>	It is not necessary to remove thatch.
<b>June Through August</b>	
<b>Mowing</b>	Raise mower height to 3 1/2 inches. Mow before the grass gets above 5 inches tall. Leave clippings on the lawn.
<b>Fertilization</b>	Do not fertilize tall fescue at this time. Submit a soil sample for analysis to determine nutrient requirements. (Contact your county Extension office for details.)
<b>Watering</b>	Either water as needed to prevent drought or allow the lawn to go dormant. About 1 inch of water per application each week is adequate for irrigated lawns. Sandy soils often require more frequent watering, or about 1/2 inch of water every third day. Do not discontinue irrigation in midsummer. Water dormant lawns every three weeks if it doesn't rain.

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## June Through August (cont.)

<b>Disease Control</b>	Check for brown patch disease. Achieving control of brown patch with fungicides is difficult at best. A better approach is to improve drainage and air movement and carefully manage nitrogen fertilization and irrigation. Reduce nitrogen fertilization to a minimum and avoid overwatering.
<b>Weed Control</b>	Avoid the use of herbicides at this time.
<b>Insect Control</b>	Check for grubs in July and August and control them if necessary.

## September Through November

<b>Mowing</b>	Tall fescue should be 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches tall after mowing. As a general guideline, try to mow often enough that no more than one-third of the grass height is cut. Leave grass clippings on your lawn. Grass clippings decompose quickly and can provide up to 25 percent of the lawn's fertilizer needs. If prolonged rain or other factors prevent mowing and clippings are too plentiful to leave on the lawn, they can be collected and used as mulch. Whatever you do, don't bag them! Grass clippings do not belong in landfills.
<b>Fertilization</b>	The best way to determine your lawn's nutrient needs is by a soil test. In the absence of a soil test, use a complete nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (N-P-K) turf-grade fertilizer with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio (that is, 12-4-8 or 24-6-12). Fertilize with 1 pound of actual nitrogen (N) per thousand square feet in mid-September and again in November (about the time the grass is green but not actively growing).
<b>Watering</b>	Water to wet the soil to a soil depth of 4 to 6 inches. Probe with a screwdriver to determine moisture depth. Tall fescue needs a weekly application of about 1 to 1 1/4 inches of water. On sandy soils, it often requires more frequent watering – for example, 1/2 inch of water every third day. It is often necessary to irrigate an area for 3 to 5 hours to apply 1 inch of water. (It requires 640 gallons of water to deliver 1 inch of water per thousand square feet.) Because clay soils accept water slowly, irrigate just until runoff occurs, wait 1/2 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 that it is time to water. Proper irrigation may prevent or reduce pest problems and environmental stress later in the summer.
<b>Weed Control</b>	Apply broadleaf herbicides to control dandelions and other weeds if necessary. Caution: Some herbicides may affect newly seeded turf. Do not apply 2-way or 3-way postemergence, broadleaf herbicides containing 2,4-D, dicamba, mecoprop or triclopyr until seedlings have been mowed at least three times. Follow label directions.
<b>Insect Control</b>	Check for white grubs in September and October and control them if necessary.
<b>Renovation</b>	Overseed thin, bare areas as grass begins to respond to cooler temperatures in September and early October. Use a blend of tall fescue cultivars at 6 pounds per thousand square feet. Apply a starter-type (high phosphorus) fertilizer at time of seeding. Keep the seedbed moist with light, frequent sprinklings several times a day to ensure good germination.

## December Through February

<b>Mowing</b>	Remove lawn debris (rocks, sticks and leaves). Mow lawn at 3 inches and remove clipping debris at spring greenup. Mow before grass gets taller than 5 inches. Leave clippings on the lawn.
<b>Fertilization</b>	Fertilize with 1 pound of actual nitrogen per thousand square feet in February. In absence of soil test results, use a complete (N-P-K) turf-grade fertilizer with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio.
<b>Watering</b>	Water, if needed, to prevent excessive drying. About 1 inch of water per application each week is adequate.
<b>Weed Control</b>	Apply broadleaf herbicides as necessary for control of chickweed, henbit or other weeds.
<b>Aerification</b>	Delay coring until fall.

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