

TIPS FOR IMPROVING THE LONG TERM HEALTH OF YOUR LAWN.

Proper care of an established lawn does more than affect the immediate appearance of the turf; it also affects the turf's long-term health and ability to resist pest attacks. Follow this tip to help meet these goals.

SOIL pH and LIMING

Soil pH directly determines how available most nutrients are, both to plants and to the soil microorganisms. Fertilizer efficiency increases with an increase in soil pH. For example; nitrogen applied to a lawn with a soil pH of 7.0 is approximately 100% efficient, while the same nitrogen applied to a lawn with a soil pH of 5.0 is approximately 53% efficient.

Turf grasses grow best in soils with a neutral pH of 6.5 to 7.0 through the entire root zone. Unfortunately, the soils in most of the Atlantic region are naturally acidic and range from pH 4.5 to 5.5. A pH of 7.0 can be difficult to maintain. Given that turfgrass performs well at pH 6.5 and nutrient losses are also minor at pH 6.5, this is the generally recommended target.

Soil pH can be increased and maintained by regularly applying lime.

Fertilizing alone can lower the soil pH. The nitrogen component in fertilizer is an acidifying agent and therefore, an annual application of lime is often required to simply offset the effects of added nitrogen.

Note: Weed problems are worse in low pH soils. By raising the soil pH, the weeds become less competitive. The vigour and density of the turfgrass also improves, which suppresses weed germination and growth.

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