

# Your Perfect Lawn

The Ultimate Guide To Beautiful Problem Free Lawns.

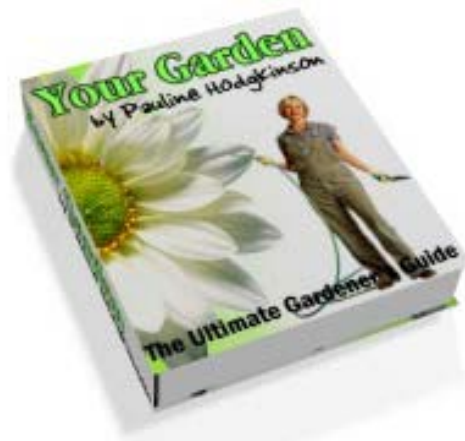
Written by Pauline Hodgkinson

<http://www.mrsgreenfingers.co.uk>

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# Your Perfect Lawn

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## **Choosing the Grass:**

The first step before you start a new lawn is to select the best type of grass for your particular requirements. It is essential that you choose the grass variety to suit your needs and one that likes the local climate and the type of soil found in your garden, this is crucial to the overall success of your new lawn. All grasses have preference as to the type of conditions they do best in, the amount of water and nutrients they need, their resistance to pests, their tolerance for shade, and the degree of wear they can withstand, so it's clear that you should choose wisely. New grass varieties and mixtures come out on the market every year, ask the expert at your local garden centre about what's right for your area and specifications. A general-purpose grass is the choice for many people but there are harder wearing varieties suitable for playing areas, able to withstand a greater punishment from heavy usage or poor soil, and finer grasses that produce the lawns, which are to be admired rather than walked upon.

The next decision will be whether to lay turf or sow seed.

Turf has the advantage over seed in that you can have a lawn almost instantaneous. From soil preparation to final layout, it's possible to install a modest-sized sod lawn in one day. If you buy turf from a reputable local grower, you are guaranteed to get a grass that grows well in your area. The grower may offer several choices, from low to high maintenance.

## **Laying Turf:**

You can lay turf at almost any time of year, even when the ground is slightly frozen or during the heat of summer (although you'll need to water more in summer). In comparison, generally spring and autumn only offer sufficiently favourable conditions for sowing most seed lawns.

Turf is especially useful where patches of lawn have become bare, weedy, or damaged. Winter use of street salt in northern regions is one major cause of damage. Make a repair by removing the threadbare turf and prepare the soil for planting by adding a little fertilizer. You can buy a roll or two of sod at a garden centre and place it over the area. If erosion is a problem on a slope, no matter how gentle or steep the incline, turf is the

better option. Its healthy, heavy root mat will withstand water runoff even before the lawn is fully established.

To prepare ground for a new lawn, rototill the topsoil to a depth of two to three inches. You can usually rent tillers at your local machine and garden hire store to make this job much easier, after which water well and apply a fertilizer high in phosphorus.

On delivery day, water the soil to make it moist and damp but not muddy. Turf should be put down no more than 24 hours after it has been cut at the farm, because the rolled turf will heat up and begin to biodegrade. Inspect the turf before the delivery truck leaves. Shake it to make sure it doesn't fall apart. The turf should be green and the soil moist. If you don't like the appearance, refuse to accept it and send it back.

Suppliers usually transport turf on pallets carrying 50 to 75 square yards each. To avoid a lot of heavy lifting, ask the driver to place pallets in convenient places around your property (but don't let them drive over walkways or patios, because the combined weight of the truck and the sod can cause damage).

Begin to lay the turf along the longest straight line next to a sidewalk or driveway. When preparing the soil, leave the soil level  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch below the level of that straight surface to make a neat, smooth transition from grass to pavement.

Lay a single row of turf and tamp it down with thick boards on which you can apply pressure to firm the turf in place.

Butt and push the sod's edges and ends against each other tightly, without stretching. Stagger the joints in each row like bricks, and avoid gaps or overlaps. On slopes, place the turf pieces across the slope.

After laying the first row place a plank of wood over the top so that you can stand or kneel on it to lay your next row. This spreads your weight and avoids walking on the new lawn. Keep a quantity of sifted soil at hand for smoothing out irregularities in the surface as the turf is laid.

Use a large knife to trim the corners. Avoid leaving small strips at the outer edges, because they won't retain moisture, which could lead to dieback.

After installation, roll the entire area with a lawn roller (available from machine and garden hire stores) one-third full of water to press the sod roots into the contact with the soil.

Do not allow the turf to dry out; it is essential to water it thoroughly so that it reaches the soil below. This will prevent the turf from shrinking and forming gaps. Allow newly laid turf untouched for three to four weeks which will give the roots time to become established in the underlying soil.

### **Sowing a New Lawn:**

**Allow adequate time for ground Preparation.** Ideally you should plan ahead and prepare your site at least three months before you intend to sow the seed. Thorough site preparation is the key to establishing a healthy lawn. The best time to start the preparation is early summer for an autumn sowing.

Clearing the site of all weeds, stones, rubble, plant growth and roots is so important and time spent at this stage will be rewarded later. To eradicate the weeds, use a systemic weed killer such as Roundup. Use a spray applicator; wait until there is no wind to avoid the chemical from drifting onto nearby plants. Roundup is a non-selective weed killer and will kill any plants to which it is applied. Take great care when spraying always follow the manufactures instructions for mixing and spraying.

It might take several weeks for many of the weeds to die but once they have died back, rake them up and dispose of them.

### **Start to prepare the soil:**

The best soil for a healthy lawn is a well-drained, sandy loam soil with a depth of 15cm (6in) to 20cm (8in), though 30 cm (12in) is better. If the topsoil is poor or shallow then new topsoil should be added, this can be transferred from other areas of the garden or you can buy good topsoil from your local Garden centre.

If your soil is particularly sandy you will need to incorporate some well-rotted, organic matter to help retain water and nutrients. On heavy, clay soils, drainage may need to be improved by incorporating roughly two parts of sand to every one part of soil.

If the soil drains badly then it is better to install some form of drainage. The most rewarding but also labour intensive project is to dig trenches in a herringbone pattern across the lawn; these connect to a main drain through the garden towards the lowest part. Alternatively you can dig down to the sub-soil, add a 15cm (6in) layer of rubble followed by a 5cm

(2in) layer of grit or coarse sand and finally replace with a 15cm (6in) layer of topsoil.

### **Levelling the site:**

If you require a flat surface, drive pegs 10 to 12 ft apart, adjusting them by means of a long straight edge and spirit level. Leveling large areas, or creating a particular slope, use an engineer's level and intervening pegs. Where leveling involves more than a trivial alteration in contours, first take off the topsoil to a depth of 6 in. and put it on one side. Next remove the subsoil as necessary, excavating material from high places to fill hollows. After making the sub-soil perfectly level, restore the topsoil evenly over the entire area. Make sure that the topsoil is uniform over the whole site. Shallow patches of topsoil will show up later as there will be marked variations in the appearance of the turf, because grass will not thrive in those areas.

Rake the area to a level surface and then firm in the soil gently using a garden roller or simply by walking the ground and firming using your feet. When the area is quite flat and even, rake over again to make a fine loose soil at the top, the ground should be firm but not compacted.

### **Rest the land:**

Leave the prepared site for three to four weeks to allow dormant weed seeds to germinate. Using a hoe you can clear these weeds or you can use a systemic weed killer.

### **Fertilizing:**

A week before you sow the seeds, add fertilizer to the area at the rate of a handful per square yard. Growmore is a granular feed that you can scatter before gently raking it into the surface.

### **Lime Requirement:**

A slightly acid soil reaction (pH 5.5 to 6.0) favours the finer grasses, but undue acidity is undesirable especially at sowing time. Where the reaction is pH 5.5 or lower, apply up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. of chalk or ground limestone per sq. yd.

## **Sowing:**

The best time of year to sow grass seed is from mid August to late September but it can also be sown from the middle of March to early May. The progress of spring-sown lawns is greatly influenced by weather conditions, and in some years when the conditions are cooler there may be a delay in germination. If the summer is dry watering demands will be high.

It is also important to choose the right day. The topsoil should be dry with moist soil just below the surface and the weather should be fine and calm. Mark out the area into square yards or metres. Shake the box to mix up the seeds and weigh out the seed to cover each square metre or yard. You can add sharp sand to the seed to make spreading easier, but ensure you mix the seed well. Sow the seeds by scattering them first one way and then the other. Sowing too thickly gives patchy germination and seeding too thinly spread will require re-sowing. After sowing, lightly rake over the area, ensuring that you don't bury the seed.

Once the seeds have been sown, they will need to be protected. Fencing off the site from people and animals will give some protection. To discourage birds from eating the seeds or just having a dust bath in your lovely laid seedbed, tie lengths of black cotton to short sticks and criss-cross the cotton over the area, suspended 7.5cm (3in) above the soil.

The late season sowing should produce seedlings that start to appear 7-21 days after sowing. During the early stages of growth, carefully weed the area by hand where possible, removing any weeds before they flower. As the grass continues to grow, it will stifle further weed growth. Seedlings are very susceptible to drought so during dry spells, keep them well watered, although take care not to over water. When the new lawn is 5cm (2in) high, cut with a rotary mower, down to 2.5cm (1in).

Carefully rake up the clippings. Follow this procedure for the first three to four cuts. Heavy usage should be avoided for the first 12 months.

Many of the weeds that spring up in newly sown lawns are annuals such as groundsel, goosefoot, chickweed, mayweed and shepherd's purse and although they may appear to retard the growth of the grass, they do not survive regular mowing. However you must not allow annuals to seed.

Perennial weeds such as plantains, dandelions and buttercups can be uprooted by hand but on new lawns avoid damage to the grass by treading on boards.

When the grass is three or four months old, a selective weed killer can be applied. Do not use lawn sand preparations until the turf is 12 months old.

To retain the lush greenness and uniform quality, a lawn should be mown and rolled when necessary, aerated regularly, brushed and raked, top dressed, weeded and kept free of pests and fungi.

### **Mowing**

Mowing is good for your lawn because it keeps the grass neat and promotes compact growth. The grass must be long enough to feed the roots but short enough to be manageable. For a general-purpose family lawn, this means cutting the grass so that it's about 2.5cm (1in) long. To achieve a 'bowling-green' finish on a well-laid lawn of fine grasses, you will need to cut the grass back to 1.2cm (½in).

Begin mowing in March and finish in October. The more often you mow your lawn the slower it grows; this is because every time the grass is cut it receives a check in growth. Mowing little and often therefore, not only produces a better finish, but it is more efficient. Ideally, cut your lawn twice a week in summer and once a week in spring and autumn. To maintain an even sward, vary the direction of mowing from time to time. If you cut very infrequently avoid cutting the lawn back too hard because this shocks the grasses and results in a loss of vigour, allowing weeds and moss to invade. Try to only mow the lawn when it is dry. During very dry periods, leave the grass cuttings on the surface, provided that the turf is free from weeds.

A lawn's ideal length will vary with the type of grass, but many turf grass species are healthiest when kept between 1 and 1-1/2 inches. You may have to readjust your mower - most are set too low. For a healthy lawn, mow frequently. Short clippings are tender and rot quickly. Set the mower blade high -- thicker lawns shade out weeds. Adjust the pH to 6.5 to 7.5, the range preferred by most grass species.

It is perfectly acceptable to leave the clippings on the lawn to feed the grass provided you mow the grass regularly. Remove the longer, lush growth when you cut the grass for the first time each spring or after taking a holiday. Thereafter, provided the clippings are under 2cm (1/2in) long and they scatter evenly, they can be left. Any clippings removed from the lawn can be placed on a compost heap.

**When mowing, the advice often offered is that you should remove lawn clippings or they'll make thatch.**

It is perfectly acceptable to leave the clippings on the lawn to feed the grass provided you mow the grass regularly because there will be only a relatively small amount of clippings and these will be short in length and therefore breakdown easily. According to research, thatch is often produced more by the misuse of strong fertilizers and pesticides than by clippings alone. Thatch is a layer of dried grass clippings that builds up on the soil surface. As long as this layer is less than 1/2 inch (2.7mm) it's harmless and in fact has some of the same benefits as mulch returning fertility to the lawn. A healthy soil biota can easily decompose the normal amount of clippings to keep the thatch layer from building up. But earthworms, which perform much of this task, are especially vulnerable to popular lawn chemicals.

However, all grass forms a layer of dead plant material, between the grass blades and the soil. When this has built up to a greater depth than the safe zone, raking the lawn or using a machine that slices through the thatch layer to break it up can reduce it. Sprinkling a thin layer of topsoil or compost over the lawn will also help.

### **Scarifying:**

Raking the lawn with spring-tined rake helps prevents the build up of thatch. If it gets too thick, the thatch can smother the grass and reduce vigour. If the layer builds up over 2.5cm (1in), water can't soak through and the possibility of disease is increased. It is advisable not to rake heavily in spring as this can damage the grass. The grass doesn't also produce side shoots at this time of year and scarifying will open up the turf making it susceptible to weed invasion. You should start to scarify your lawn in late spring and early summer to remove patches of dead moss. Then in early autumn you can remove debris from the lawn and thatch that may have built up. If there is moss present, use a moss killer a week or two before scarifying.

### **Feeding:**

Most garden lawns need an annual application of nitrogen to maintain vigour and keep the grass looking healthy. The best time to apply a high-nitrogen lawn fertiliser is in spring when the grass is growing fast. You can also feed your lawn in autumn to help it build up a good root system and produce tough growth that can shrug-off diseases. Use a specialist autumn feed that has been formulated to promote the right growth.



**Get your lawn in shape for summer by first aerating and then fertilizing it.** Parts of the lawn that get heavy traffic, such as paths and play areas will often become very compacted, impeding drainage. To help improve the drainage, and avoid weed and moss problems, it's a good idea to aerate the lawn. The perfect time of year to do this is in September when the soil is moist. Aeration is the removal of small cores of soil from your lawn, which helps to break up compact dirt and packed mulch. Even more important, these holes allow vital air, water and fertilizer down to the root area. You can purchase a machine for this task or hire one from your machine hire dealer. Another excellent way of aerating your lawn is to push a garden fork into the ground to about 15cm (6in) deep and move it backwards and forwards to create air channels in the soil. Then push the fork in again about 10cm (4in) away and repeat the process until the whole area is done. One very simple way to aerate your lawn is by wearing a pair of shoes that have spikes on the soles. Pads containing spikes that simply fit under your shoes are available from garden centres, but if you have a pair of golfing shoes (with steel spikes) then these are ideal. Wear them when you spread the fertilizer. Once you've aerated the soil, it is a good time to apply a top dressing.

**Most lawns need to be fertilized every year,** because they need more nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium than soils usually contain. These three elements are the primary ingredients found in most lawn fertilizers. It's important not to over-fertilize however - you could do more harm to your lawn than good - and it's best to use a slow-release fertilizer that feeds the lawn slowly. It's also important to check the soil's pH. Grass is best able to absorb nutrients in a slightly acidic soil, with a pH of 6.5 to 7.0. Acidic soil can be "sweetened" with lime; soil that's not acid enough can be made sourer by adding sulphur.

Top dressing is the application of a mixture of good quality soil, sand and humus to the surface of the turf. Top dressing is used to level out minor humps and hollows to produce a perfectly even lawn surface. The grass also grows denser as top dressing helps to promote the development of runners. It also improves the water-holding capacity of sandy soil and drainage is improved on heavy soils. Do not apply more than 12mm (1in) of top-dressing in one go to any area because you will smother the grass.

**Nitrogen-** Stimulates leaf growth and makes grass greener

*Essential* – this food is the depleted quickly and needs applying every season

*Important-* Do not apply in winter when active growth is not wanted.

### **Spring/summer lawn fertilizer**

Lawn Sand

Sulphate of ammonia

Dried blood

**Phosphates-** Helps to build up the root system

*Essential* – often needs applying every season

Vigorous root production is stimulated.

Growth starts earlier in spring & side shooting is promoted in autumn.

### **Autumn lawn fertilizer**

Bone meal

Super-phosphates

Potash

Stimulates lush, healthy growth

Apply every season, but not essential

Evidence shows that this food, toughens the grass making it less susceptible to drought, discoloration & disease

### **Spring or autumn lawn fertilizer**

Sulphate of Potash

### **Watering:**

Watering properly will help your lawn grow deep roots that will make it stronger and less vulnerable to drought. It's best to water only when the lawn really needs it, and then to water slowly and deeply. This trains the grass roots down. Frequent shallow watering trains the roots to stay near the surface, making the lawn less able to find moisture during dry periods. Courser, harder wearing lawns can survive lengthy periods without rainfall but after time will turn brown, greening up again as soon as the rains return. Always water in the evening to help reduce water loss through evaporation.

## **Work schedule for the Year:**

### ***January***

All that is required is to rake up the fallen leaves. It's best to keep off the lawn at this time of year as you can harm it by walking on the frozen or waterlogged turf.

### ***February***

In milder parts of the country you can start to work on improving the appearance of your lawn. The main job will be scattering worm casts with a stiff brush to disperse the soil.

### ***March***

Now is the time to start your lawn care programme.

Rake the lawn to remove leaves and rubbish as soon as the grass starts to grow and the weather and ground conditions are favourable. Be careful whilst raking as too much enthusiasm can damage your grass. If there have been heavy frosts, it is a good idea to settle the turf by light rolling. You can give the lawn its first cut during this month. Set the mower blades high, as a close cut could result in yellowing of the grass.

A dry day is best for the first cut and two cuts should be sufficient this month. You should also examine the lawn for signs of moss and disease. Neaten the edges with a half moon cutter.

### ***April***

Commence feeding and weeding at the end of April, as long as the grass and weeds are actively growing. If you are going to use lawn sand, ensure that it is spread evenly and the dead moss is raked up two weeks later. You can mow more frequently now but do not cut lower than 2cm ( $\frac{3}{4}$  in). On a fine grass lawn, dig out any patches of coarse grass present and fill the holes with sifted soil and re-seed/re-turf.

### ***May***

Increase the frequency of mowing and lower the height to give a closer cut. If there is little rain during this month you should irrigate your lawn copiously.

This month is usually the best time for killing lawn weeds as the grass is normally dry and the soil is still moist. If you have a problem with clover or annual meadow grass, rake the patches before mowing.

## ***June***

The summer mowing regime can commence. Cut twice a week if the soil is moist and the grass is growing rapidly. If there is a long dry spell you should raise the height of the blades and don't use a grass box.

If the lawn needs 'greening up', feed with a summer fertilizer. Spot treat any weeds that have survived earlier treatments. It is important to give your lawn a good rake before mowing to keep the runners of clover under control.

Trim the lawn edges regularly and water well during dry spells. Hot weather can often bake the soil surface so it's a good idea to spike the surface before watering.

## ***July***

Continue mowing and watering regularly if the weather is dry. It is important to give your lawn a good rake before mowing to keep the runners of clover under control.

## ***August***

Continue as for July. If you have been away on holiday and the grass is long, raise the mower blades to give a longer cut; this will avoid shocking the root system.

This is the last month that you should apply weed killers and nitrogen-rich fertilizers.

## ***September***

This is the start of the autumn programme for your lawn. Mow less frequently and you should raise the blades on your lawnmower.

Worm casts may start to appear now, scatter these with a stiff brush to disperse the soil. You can use an autumn lawn fertilizer if the grass is looking dull. Repairs to the lawn can also be carried out now.

You can scarify your lawn to help remove thatch and moss. Then spike any compacted areas to improve drainage and top-dress. The top-dressing will help to even out all the lumps and bumps, as well as breaking down the thatch and improving the soil. When you do top-dress, try and work it into the grass with the back of a steel rake.

### ***October***

Regular mowing comes to an end during this month, for the last cut or two, raise the blades. Apply an autumn fertilizer, carry out repairs and scarify. There's still time to spike and top-dress if you didn't last month. Rake up fallen leaves; dig out any patches of coarse grass present in the lawn and fill the holes with sifted soil and re-seed/re-turf.

### ***November***

You can mow your lawn one last time during November, but don't attempt to mow if the weather is frosty or wet and the surface is firm.

Clean and oil all equipment for winter storage and brush away worm casts. Keep the lawn clear of leaves and other debris.

### ***December***

Apart from raking up leaves you should try and keep off the lawn to avoid unnecessary compaction.

## **Weeds:**

Weeds tell us a great deal about our soil and the environment. In many instances they indicate what our soil lacks. Improving the soil will undoubtedly reduce many weeds with only environmental improvements on our part necessary.

The following common weeds in your area can alert you to nutrient shortages or excesses and overall soil health. Some weeds love good rich soil, while a second bloom of some weeds may show that the soil is declining. Knowledge of what the presence of certain weeds means helps you to manage your soil in a more productive and less haphazard manner.

**Chickweed** - Good, fertile, cultivated soil.

**Bindweed** - poor drainage, compacted dirt caused by tilling while wet.

**Burdock** - Too much lime, creating a gypsum soil.

**Chicory** - Excellent soil.

**Cinquefoils** - Hardpan. Poor soil needing lime.

**Clovers** - Grow in poor soil, and work to rebuild it.

**Daisy** - If these are growing well, the soil is too acidic.

**Dandelions** - Actually PRODUCE humus (as do nettles) just like earthworms! Soil that won't grow them is totally unfit.

**Horse Nettle** - This prickly plant shows areas of crusted soil produced by frequent flood/drainage cycles.

**Lamb's Quarters** - this annual can produce up to 40,000 seeds per plant! They love to grow in well-manured, cultivated soil.

**Mallows** - Potassium excess, wet, sandy soil.

**Milkweed** - Moist, cultivated soils.

**Mustard** - (includes Shepherd's Purse and Peppergrass) - too much potassium and sodium, indicates hardpan.

**Nightshade/Bittersweet** - Poor, over-cultivated soil which has been used for heavy feeding crops. These plants are **Poisonous!**

**Pigweed** (*Amaranthus spinosis*) - Cultivated, light, dry sandy soil.

**Plantain** - Grows only in compacted soil.

**Water Hemlock** - Poor drainage – This plant is **Poisonous!**

**Wild Carrot** - (Queen Anne's Lace) - Shows that poor soil is improving. If the roots are well formed, there is humus. If the roots are knotty, the soil is compacted, but rich.

**Wild Strawberry** - Same indicators as cinquefoil.

## **Weed Classification:**

The most common method of weed classification is by use of the life span of the weeds.

### ***Annual Weeds***

Annual weeds complete their life cycle in one year. Most annuals depend on an abundance of seed production and proper climatic conditions for their ability to survive.

Annuals can be broken into two groups:

***Summer annuals*** - these germinate in the spring, reach full maturity in the summer or autumn, set seed, and die by winter.

***Winter annuals*** - these germinate in the autumn, over-winter as seedlings, grow in the spring, set seed in the summer and die.

Some weeds exhibit both a summer and winter annual habit.

### ***Biennial Weeds***

Biennial weeds have a life span of two years. They grow from seed, which usually germinates in the spring. The first season is spent in storing up food, usually in short, fleshy roots. The foliage is usually limited to formation of a rosette of leaves. The following season the plant draws heavily upon the stored food and grows vigorously. It produces seed in the summer or autumn and then usually dies.

### ***Perennial Weeds***

Perennial weeds are plants that live for more than two years. In many cases no seed is produced the first year, but seeding occurs each following year for the life of the plant.

There are three groups of perennials:

***Simple perennials*** - these spread only by seed. Vegetative reproduction can occur, however, if the roots are cut or broken, with each piece sending out roots and stems to form a new plant, e.g., dandelion, plantain, curled dock.

***Bulbous perennials*** - these reproduce by underground bulbs as well as by seed.

***Creeping perennials*** - these may spread seed but also by creeping roots, creeping aboveground stems (stolons) or creeping underground stems (rhizomes). Perennial weeds are the most difficult to control, and require repeated cultivation, soil sterilization and in some instances by taking drastic steps of specific herbicide treatments.

## **Common Weeds Found In Lawns:**

The suppression of weeds in the garden and in particular in the lawn is of the utmost importance. Most garden weeds are native species, which prefer to grow in disturbed ground or in an open situation. Their capacity for producing and distributing seed is such that, no matter how thoroughly and regularly the ground tended, there will always be new crops of weeds to replace those that are removed. Therefore regular maintenance and rigorous control is essential to keep the lawn free from weeds and looking at its very best.

### **Couch Grass** (*Agropyrum repens*, syn. *Elymus repens*)

Found in beds and borders; a perennial weed that spreads by underground stems with small fibrous roots at every joint.

#### **Control**

The best way to keep weeds under control is constant vigilance; never allow the weed to flower or set seed. It is difficult to eradicate by cultivation but constant hoeing will exhaust the perennial root system.

Remove by hand as soon as you see them. Use a fork so as to avoid cutting up the stems, as even a small piece left in the soil will quickly start another new plant.

Regular close mowing will kill off most infestations in the first season.

Spray with a systemic weed killer, such as one that contains glyphosate, as this is absorbed through the leaves of the plant and the active ingredient makes its way through the cells of the plant down to the root. It kills these first and then the foliage starts to die off.

In a border, mulching will help to eliminate light, which all green plants need to survive.

There are several effective mulches, which will act as a weed barrier; weed suppressing fabric, well-rotted manure or garden compost, bark, grass cuttings, gravel and even a thick layer of newspaper.

### **Creeping Buttercup** (*Ranunculus repens*)

A spreading perennial weed that is a serious problem in lawns, as well as garden borders. In the lawn it forms a rosette at soil level so isn't affected by mowing. It spreads by runners that creep along and take root at intervals, forming new plants. It is a very aggressive weed and can colonize large areas.



## **Control**

Never allowing the plant to flower or set seed.

This particular weed is sensitive to all selective weed killers so it is easy to control in the lawn. Spraying with one that contains 2,4-d, such as Verdane will kill this weed

- Applying lawn sand to large areas will help to check its growth
- Established clumps in the lawn need to be rake regularly before mowing so that creeping stems are brought up to meet the mower blades
- Spraying with weed killer will do the job if the weeds are in the garden border.

Spray with a systemic weed killer, such as one that contains glyphosate.

- Spot treatments on lawns are not recommended, as the weed killer will kill the surrounding grass too.

## **Daisy (Bellis perennis)**

Daisies are more of a problem in the lawn than the garden border. They can tolerate close mowing and still flower. They spread by seed so can colonize the lawn fairly quickly and become a nuisance. They are relatively easy to get rid of because they are susceptible to weed killers and one application is usually enough to kill them.

## **Control**

Never allowing the weed to flower or set seed.

- If infestations are sparse then weed them out using a hand fork known as a daisy grubber, (two pronged fork) to help loosen the roots
- Keeping the grass healthy and well fed will help to prevent daisies becoming established
- In the lawn use a weed killer as part as a weed-and-feed programme. Some systemic weed killers may kill the surrounding grass but a weed stick, such as Elliott's Touchweeder, which is brushed on to the weeds leaves, won't harm the grass.

## **Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale)**

This is a perennial weed with large rosettes and bright yellow flower head. It is commonly found in garden borders and in lawns. It can tolerate close mowing so hand weeding it usually the best control method but the long taproot needs to be removed, as new plants will form from them.

## **Control**

Never allowing the weed to flower or to set seed.

- Hand weed plants with a hand fork, removing as much of the tap root as possible A long probe, two-pronged fork is specially made for the purpose of removing them and is available from many good Garden centres.

- Pouring salt on to the centre of the weed will kill it overnight, then it should be removed by hand
- Spraying with weed killer will do the job if the weeds are in the garden border.
- In lawns you can also use a weed stick, such as Elliott's Touchweeder which is brushed on to the weeds leaves without harming the grass. More than one application may be needed for this weed.

### **Moss**

Moss is a tiny non-flowering plant that is one of the most troublesome weeds in the lawn. It is a symptom of poorly maintained grass, to ensure permanent freedom from this unsightly mass; the basic principles of good lawn maintenance must be rigorously followed.

Dampness is usually the prime suspect in the spread of moss, so spring and autumn are the main periods of rapid colonization. This is brought about by poor drainage and or compaction. Moisture is not the only cause as moss can also be a common sight on sandy soils, which are free-draining. Underfeeding the lawn, over acidity, too much shade or even cutting the grass incorrectly may also cause this problem.

### **Control**

- Applying a moss killer in spring and autumn, either by adding lawn sand or by chemical moss killer. Lawn sand in spring will burn the moss, providing a boost to grass growth. A chemical moss killer, such as Phostrogen Moss Killer & Lawn Tonic Soluble can be used in spring and autumn and is watered in to the affected area and then after a couple of weeks the dead moss is raked up and any bare patches reseeded
- Feeding the lawn each spring will encourage the healthy, strong grass to grow
- Don't cut the grass too short as it can weaken it, allowing moss to quickly spread. Also grass that is too long, especially in damp weather will encourage trailing moss to grow
- Reduce shade on the lawn if possible. Moss normally occurs under trees so remove lower branches of the tree to allow light on to the grass.
- Scarifying and aerating the lawn in autumn, and if needed lightly in spring, will improve the drainage. This is one of the most important operations in the control of moss

· After scarifying and aerating, top-dress the lawn, brushing it lightly into the soil. Top-dressing will help build up the fertility of the soil, and improve drainage.

**Clover** (*Trifolium repens*)

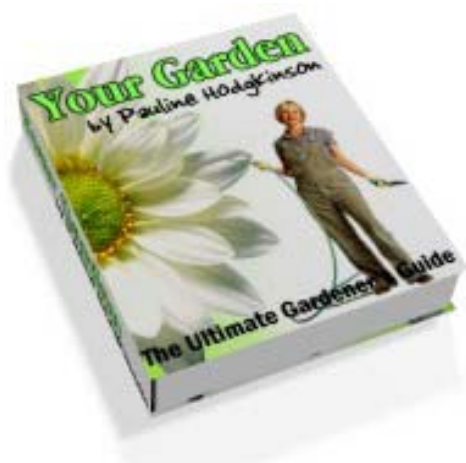
White clover, or Dutch clover, spreads by runners, which creep along the surface of the soil rooting at intervals and forming new plants. It is a very aggressive weed and can colonize large areas.

**Control**

Never allowing the weed to flower or set seed.

- Established clumps in the lawn need to be rake regularly before mowing so that creeping stems are brought up to meet the mower blades.
- Keep the lawn well watered especially in dry weather.
- Apply lawn sand in spring, which will burn off the top growth and vital nitrogen for clover control, will then be provided.
- Spray with a selective lawn weed killer, such as Verdone. Treat in June or July and one treatment should be enough.

**Good Luck & Here's To Your Perfect Lawn**



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