

K-State expert offers tips when lawn is too wet to mow

Never mow more than one third of grass at a time

MANHATTAN, Kan. – While Midwest farmers believe it never rains enough for their liking, many homeowners sometimes claim just the opposite when it comes time to mow their lawn.

Ward Upham, a horticulture specialist with K-State Research and Extension, said a solution during times when rain comes at less-than-ideal times for homeowners is to mow the grass when possible – even though that usually means the grass is higher than normal. “But,” he cautions, “set your mower as high as possible and cut the grass down in steps.”

That means homeowners will have to mow more often, Upham said, moving down the height of their mower blade gradually until they’re taking off one-third of the grass blade. “It is always best never to take more than one-third of the grass blade at one time,” Upham said. “If more is taken in one cutting, the plant reacts by using stored energy reserves to quickly send up new growth. This reduces the amount of energy available for the plant to deal with stress or damage done by insects or disease.”

Upham and his colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for keeping yards healthy and beautiful year-round. The newsletter is [available to view online](#) or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their yard-related questions to Upham at wupham@ksu.edu.

Sidebar: It’s time to fertilize warm-season grasses

June is the time to fertilize such warm-season grasses as bermudagrass, zoysiagrass and buffalograss, said Kansas State University horticulture specialist Ward Upham.

“These species all thrive in warmer summer weather, so this is the time they best respond to fertilization,” Upham said. “The most important nutrient they need is nitrogen; these species need it in varying amounts.”

Upham recommends the following for each grass variety:

- Bermudagrass – This requires the most nitrogen of the three. Plan for four applications maximum, about four weeks apart, one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. Plan the last application no later than Aug. 15. “You may also wish to only fertilize two or three times depending on how aggressive you wish the bermudagrass to be,” Upham said.
- Zoysiagrass – Too much nitrogen is worse than too little. Upham recommends 1 ½ to 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, split evenly between two applications: one in early June and the second in mid-July.
- Buffalograss – This requires the least amount of nitrogen of the three. This variety requires just one application of one pound per 1,000 feet, in early June.

Slow release nitrogen fertilizer is preferred for zoysiagrass and bermudagrass. Slow- or quick-release nitrogen fertilizer is appropriate for bermudagrass.

Link used in this story: K-State Horticulture Newsletter, <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/newsletters/index.html>

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