

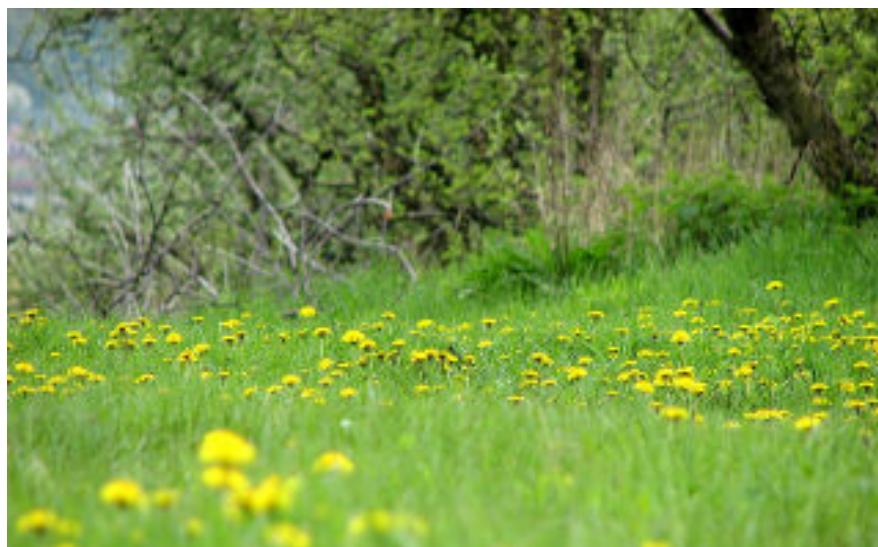
# Time to spring into lawn care

Now that the snow is mostly gone, let's assess the lawn and get it strong before the summer heat arrives. The first thing to do is to rake any debris such as tree leaves, sticks and dead grass out of the lawn.

If you have bare spots, consider reseeding or resodding these areas. Spring is a good time for this; although fall is better. Fall is best because when we cultivate the soil in spring, we trigger weeds seeds to germinate. This doesn't happen in the fall (weeds are too smart to germinate late in the growing season).

Many of us want to apply crabgrass preventer on the lawn. Although all of the crabgrass *plants* died over winter, you might have crabgrass *seeds* in your lawn that were produced last year.

Crabgrass is a warm-season grass and usually does not germinate until May. Apply your crabgrass preventer during late April (maybe a bit earlier near driveways and sidewalks where the soil warms up faster). Look at the forsythia bushes in the neighborhood if you are not sure when



crabgrass germinates. Crabgrass germinates when the golden forsythia flowers appear.

The most common crabgrass killing chemical (pendimethalin) will prevent all grass seeds from germinating. If you are sowing seed this spring, select an alternative crabgrass killer such as siduron (or just forget about the crabgrass killer this year).


With regard to fertilization, many of us can't wait to feed the lawn in early spring. But there is no hurry to fertilize your grass. It often does not actively grow until late April anyway. If you fertilized last fall, you already have enough fertilizer in the ground to last you until mid to late May (which is a good time to apply a weed-and-feed application).

Fertilization in early spring generally leads to more *blade growth* (and more mowing for us) than *root growth*. A strong root system is critical to help the lawn tolerate summer drought. Fall fer-

tilizations lead to root growth, which is another reason why lawn care in fall is so important. Still, if your lawn is thin, fertilize it this spring so it fills in better and crowds out weeds.

Start mowing your lawn when it reaches three inches. Cut the lawn high and let the grass clippings fall back to the ground.

Broadleaf weeds such as dandelions and creeping charlie should not be sprayed until they start to actively grow. For creeping charlie, wait until you see its purple flowers in May.

In general, we tend to overdo it on the lawn in *spring*. In the future, let's focus more on lawn care in *fall*. That will lead to a healthier lawn that will be easier to care for, and give us more time for other spring projects! 

**NDSU**  
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