



Installing
and caring
for lawn in
Western
Australia

Fresh Water Thinking



This guide will help you choose the right lawn for your garden and demonstrate how you can maintain a healthy, water efficient lawn. With climate change resulting in less rainfall and hotter summers, maintaining a green lawn can seem challenging.

But it doesn't have to be. The secret to a healthy and green lawn is choosing grass that suits our climate, installing it correctly and maintaining it on a regular basis.

This guide, created by the Turf Growers Association of Western Australia (TGAWA) and Water Corporation, provides the tips and advice you need to take care of your lawn, helping you save money on water and keeping your lawn looking its best.



How to choose the best grass for your lawn

When selecting grass for your home, look for a hardy warm season variety. The following varieties have been identified as having good drought tolerance and are suitable for Western Australia's warm conditions. Each has its own characteristics, from plush grasses to more broad-leafed varieties.



Buffalo grasses (soft leaf varieties)

Leaf type Soft, broad leaf

Maintenance level Low to moderate

Sunlight requirement

Minimum 4 hours direct sunlight per day

Durability

Moderate to good wear, recuperative self-repairing and green-up rate

Invasiveness Low to moderate

Non-irritant Non-irritant

Frost tolerant Yes

Drought resistant Yes

Maintenance tips

- Soft leaf Buffalo grass should be mown every 7-10 days at a height of approximately 15-20mm during the summer and every 3-5 weeks at a similar height in winter.
- Applying a quality wetting agent and/or retainer will improve water penetration and retention in the soil. This should be done three times per year (at the beginning of summer, mid-summer and early spring).



Couch grasses

Leaf type Soft leaf

Maintenance level

Moderate, requires weekly mowing in summer, requires annual dethatch

Sunlight requirement

Minimum 4-5 hours direct sunlight per day

Durability

Excellent wear, recuperative and green up rate

Invasiveness

Moderate. Can be invasive to garden beds.

Irritant level Non-irritant

Frost tolerant Yes

Drought resistant Yes

Maintenance tips

- Couch grasses should ideally be mown every 10-14 days at a height of approximately 10-12mm during summer and every 3-5 weeks in winter, raising the mowing height to approximately 12-16mm.
- Even ground is important and annual to biannual scarifying might be necessary, ideally during the spring months.
- Applying a quality wetting agent and/or retainer will improve water penetration and retention in the soil. This should be done three times a year (at the beginning of summer, mid-summer and early spring).



Kikuyu Grasses

Leaf type Soft leaf

Maintenance level

Moderate to high. High thatching if not mown regularly. Requires annual; dethatching

Sunlight requirement

Minimum 5-6 hours direct sunlight per day

Durability

Excellent wear, recuperative and green up rate

Invasiveness

High. Invasive to garden beds. Requires maintenance due to invasive nature.

Irritant level Low

Frost tolerant Yes

Drought resistant Yes

Maintenance tips

- Kikuyu Turf should ideally be mown every 10-14 days at a height of approximately 12-16mm during summer. In winter, mow every 3-5 weeks and raise the mowing height to approximately 16-20mm.
- Applying a quality wetting agent and/or retainer will improve water penetration and retention in the soil. This should be done three times a year (at the beginning of summer, mid-summer and early spring).



Zoysia Grasses

Leaf type Soft

Maintenance level

Low to moderate. Watch for thatching. Requires less mowing in cooler months.

Sunlight requirement

Minimum 5-6 hours direct sunlight per day

Durability

Moderate to good wear, recuperative self-repairing and green-up rate

Invasiveness Low to moderate

Irritant level Non-irritant

Frost tolerant No. This variety thrives in heat.

Drought resistant Yes

Maintenance tips

- Zoysia should ideally be mown every 14-21 days at a height of approximately 15-20mm during summer and every 3-5 weeks at a similar height in winter.
- Applying a quality wetting agent and/or retainer will improve water penetration and retention in the soil. This should be done three times a year (at the beginning of summer, mid-summer and early spring).



Queensland Blue

Leaf type Soft

Maintenance level

Moderate, dethatch annually

Sunlight requirement

Minimum 5-6 hours direct sunlight per day

Durability

Moderate, can wear with heavy traffic

Invasiveness Low

Irritant level Non-irritant

Frost tolerant

No. This variety thrives in heat.

Drought resistant Yes

Maintenance tips

- Queensland Blue should ideally be mown every 10-14 days at a height of approximately 10-13mm during summer. In winter, mow every 4-5 weeks and raise the mowing height to approx. 14-16mm.
- Verti-mowing or scarifying in spring is recommended every 2-3 years.
- Applying a quality wetting agent and/or retainer will improve water penetration and retention in the soil. This should be done three times a year (at the beginning of summer, mid-summer and early spring).

Installing your lawn

Proper installation is essential to the long term health of your lawn. Follow these steps when planting your lawn to give it the best chance for a healthy start:



Step 1: Install a quality irrigation system

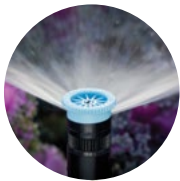
To ensure your lawn receives the right amount of water, you'll need to install an irrigation system. A Waterwise Irrigation Specialist can provide advice or design and install a system for you. Find Waterwise Irrigation Specialists in your area at watercorporation.com.au/waterwise

Best practice tip: If you're installing the irrigation system yourself, remember to do a catch cup test immediately **after** installation to ensure that 10mm of water is being evenly delivered per watering session.



Sprinkler Watering Run Times

It's important to remember that different types of sprinklers have different watering run times. The table below can be used as a guide if you need to program your controller.



Pop-up/Fixed Spray

Approximate watering rate per hour 35-45mm. Suggested run time to apply 10mm standard drink 13-16 minutes.



Rotary

Approximate watering rate per hour 10-15mm. Suggested run time to apply 10mm standard drink 40-60 minutes.



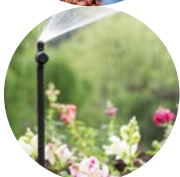
Gear Drive Rotors

Approximate watering rate per hour 10-20mm. Suggested run time to apply 10mm standard drink 30-40 minutes.



Dripline

Approximate watering rate per hour 15-20mm. Suggested run time to apply 10mm standard drink 30-40 minutes.



Micro Spray

Approximate watering rate per hour 35-45mm. Suggested run time to apply 10mm standard drink 13-16 minutes.

Step 2: Prepare your soil

Most Perth soils are very sandy. Lawn failures are often caused by poor soil conditions under the roots. Amending or removing poor soil and replacing with good soil, before laying your grass will be the single most beneficial thing you can do to ensure a healthy, water efficient lawn in the long term.

The best soil for growing grass in WA is a balance of organic matter, sand, silt and clay. This is called loam soil. Loam soil holds moisture but also drains well when you water the lawn. It retains nutrients and allows air flow, making it the most ideal soil for plants.

Best practice tip: Turf Growers Association of WA (TGAWA) recommends a blend of red or yellow sands, such as Spearwood or Gingin Red sands, or quality clay-based yellow sand such as plasterer's sand. To your red and yellow sand mixture, add loam mix blended with a percentage of organics.

Step 3: Test your soil

The pH level affects how easily minerals and nutrients can be absorbed into the soil. These minerals and nutrients support plant growth, so a pH test is essential prior to laying your lawn. The ideal soil pH for most grasses is fairly neutral at 6-7.5 pH.

Best practice tip: You can correct your pH for acidic soils by applying dolomite, which contains magnesium, an essential mineral deficient in WA soils. If your soil is too alkaline, you can correct this by applying plain elemental sulphur. Both products are relatively cheap and long lasting.

Step 4: Prepare your lawn area

Clear the site by removing all weeds, grass and debris (such as rocks, sticks and tree roots). Once you've cleared the area, there are three simple options for soil improvement

a) if you are on grey sands, you can remove the top 150 mm and replace with a quality 70% red or yellow sand and 30% organic blend

b) if already on yellow sands in new development areas, simply incorporate organics (such as animal manures, and biowaste products) through the top 150mm of the sand

c) if you are the Swan Coastal plain in an older area, cultivate the soil by incorporating a loam soil mixture, working to a depth of at least 150mm and up to 300mm. This simple calculation will help you work out soil amendment required for your lawn area; Length in metres x Width in metres x 0.15 = Total m³ e.g. for an area that is 10 meters long and 5 meters wide, 10 x 5 x 0.15 = 7.5 cubic metres required.

Tip: Never use a wood chip based product to amend your soil.

Level the area with the back of a rake or levelling board to create a smooth and consistent surface approximately 30-50mm below the level of paths and driveways.

Step 5: Lay your grass

Begin by laying the turf along the longest straight edge, for example a driveway, butting the edges tightly together without stretching the turf or overlapping. Stagger the joints like brickwork and use a sharp knife to cut the turf where required.

If you are installing turf on a sloped surface place the turf along the slope, not down the slope and peg or stake the turf where required to keep it in place.

After laying the turf, use a roller to encourage soil to grass contact. Then lightly apply a slow release fertiliser and water thoroughly. Reapply a light feed of organic fertiliser such as pelletised chicken manure 14 days after laying the grass.

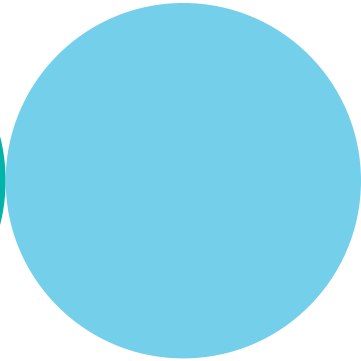
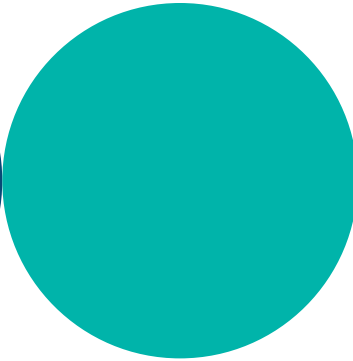


Step 6: Watering

With the correct preparation, turf will start to have shallow roots in about two weeks in WA conditions. The key to getting these shallow roots to start is by watering your new area of grass after you've installed it.

Following this you will need to ensure that your grass is watered three times a day for the first week, with gradual reduction of water application over a period of weeks.

However, there are strict watering restrictions in place across Western Australia to ensure we all use water wisely. Water Corporation provides exemptions for new lawn owners. You will need an approved exemption in order to water your new lawn.



Step 7: Mowing

Lightly mow your new lawn once you are certain that the roots have taken hold. In summer this is usually within 10-14 days of laying your grass. In winter it may take 14-21 days.

Watering restrictions and exemptions

In Western Australia, we follow a watering roster in order to conserve our precious water. This includes the Winter Sprinkler Switch-off between 1 July and 31 August, which applies in the Perth and Peel region as well as parts of the South West.

However, new lawns and turfed areas require extra water to establish over the first few weeks. For that reason, Water Corporation provides short-term exemptions to watering restrictions.

To apply for a new lawn watering exemption, visit [watercorporation.com.au/exemption](https://www.watercorporation.com.au/exemption)

Maintaining a healthy lawn

Keeping your lawn in great condition requires year-round maintenance. This includes watering, mowing, fertilising, top dressing, de-thatching and regularly applying a quality wetting agent and soil moisture retainer.

Watering

Once your lawn is established you can only water once on your rostered watering day, either before 9am or after 6pm.

It is generally best to water early in the morning as it allows the water to soak to the roots and be available throughout the day when it is most needed. In warmer months your lawn will require 10mm of irrigation per watering day to survive. You can measure your irrigation rates by using catch cups.

The use of smart technologies, such as the new smart irrigation controllers, is encouraged. These units adjust watering to local climate conditions automatically.

As the weather cools, adjust your watering appropriately. Smart irrigation units will do this automatically.

Wetting agents

Many WA soils do not absorb water well. In fact, they often become 'hydrophobic' meaning they repel water.

In addition to applying a premium soil wetting agent and a soil moisture retainer during the laying process to retain water in the top 150mm of soil. These agents should be applied at least three to four times a year (at the beginning of spring, the beginning of summer, mid to late summer and at the end of autumn).

Fertilising

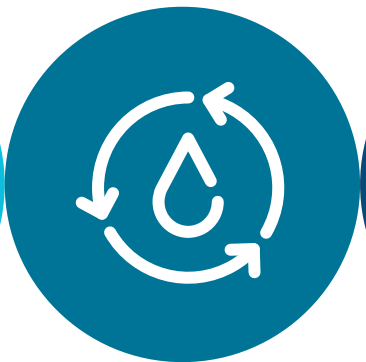
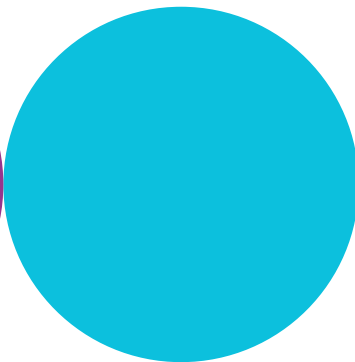
By fertilising your lawn, you are providing it with a range of nutrients for good health and growth. Apply a quality slow release fertiliser, which has no more than 1 per cent phosphorous, at the beginning of spring and every two months after this during the warmer months.

It is important to note that the recommended application rate for fertiliser is the maximum amount that should be applied. As a rule, slow release fertilisers should be spread at a rate of no more than 2kg per 100m² per application.

Remember that if you apply fertiliser excessively, whatever your lawn doesn't use washes into and affects the health of our waterways.

Mowing

Mowing your lawn will help to keep it healthy and looking good. During summer your lawn will require more frequent mowing (around every 7-21 days to the height 10 to 20 mm depending on the variety). To maintain a healthy lawn, it's important that no more than one third of the leaf be taken off at any one time, especially in warmer months.



More information

For more information on establishing and maintaining a healthy lawn visit the Turf Growers Association WA at www.tgawa.com.au

For professional advice, visit www.watercorporation.com.au to find a Waterwise Specialist near you. They include plumbers, garden designers, garden centres, garden irrigators, irrigation design shops and landscapers.

Waterwise Specialists have been trained specially to help you save water by providing specialist advice on waterwise products and services for your home and garden.



13 13 85 Account Enquiries (8am - 5pm weekdays)
13 36 77 National Relay Service

This information is available in alternative formats on request.
watercorporation.com.au/contact

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