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As a young gardener, my go-to aid for playing in the dirt was a thick foam kneeling pad. It kept my knees clean and dry and safe from sharp pebbles and sticks. For years I hung it on the fence, and it weathered well and was







It is not too early to begin preparations for a beautiful healthy lawn. Keep in mind that grasses fall into two categories in Cherokee County. Cool-season grasses include tall and fine fescues, Kentucky bluegrass, and ryegrasses. Warm-season turfs include bermudagrass, centipedegrass, zoysiagrass, and St. Augustine grasses. Also, remember that there are few (if any) absolutes when it comes to gardening and lawn care!

Here are some common lawn questions:

Removing grass clippings from my lawn will reduce thatch buildup.

Grass clippings are not the same as thatch. Thatch is a buildup of roots, stems, and shoots. A thatch layer in excess of half an inch may lead to disease or damage caused by insects, water retention, or nitrogen buildup. If left on the lawn, minimal grass clippings add nitrogen to the soil and do not necessarily contribute to thatch. However, it is important to remove excess clippings, especially if a thatch layer has developed. The most effective means of thatch control is proper mowing, irrigation, and fertilization. You may consider top-dressing your lawn regularly (every one to two years) to discourage thatch accumulation.

Recommended Mowing Heights

I need to water my lawn two to three times per week to keep it green and healthy.

In your newly installed lawn, lightly water daily for the first two to three weeks. For an established lawn, water in a pre-emergent application during February and March. Once the growth season begins, look for signs of moisture stress before setting your irrigation schedule. Stress signals include footprint indentations that remain for more than a couple of minutes or grayish color grass blades. In general, the turf will need about one inch of water per week. However, if your lawn is susceptible to runoff, you may want to water in two applications. The most effective time to irrigate is just before dawn.

I can save time and money by applying a pre-emergent and fertilizer at the same time.

A pre-emergent is more effective when applied once soil temperatures are consistently 50°F, but still during turf dormancy. When turf begins to green up, you may fertilize according to instructions from your soil report. By May, if you still have hard-to-control weeds, you may consider a post-emergent or a weed-and-feed product. You may apply lime at any time. For information specific to your turf, visit [http://6\(at\)-13\(i\)-1](http://6(at)-13(i)-1)

ment seat, and they kindly sent me a whole new product, no questions asked.

Different stores carry different brands and models and offer different pricing, so it's easier to first do your comparison shopping online. For best guarantees and warranties, shop directly with the dealer; with either source, if one is offered, be sure to fill out and return your registration card and keep a record of the purchase with your gardening supplies or files.

# **February Tips**





