

# Homeowner's Guide to Basic Landscape Care in Colorado

Provided by Metco Landscape, Inc.



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## **Introduction**

In this booklet you will find several useful pieces of information you might want to include in a booklet which you can provide to your customers. This booklet will provide your clients with information on how to care for your new sod areas, seed areas, plant materials and sprinkler system.

You can use the book in the same form that it is, or adapt it to include special instructions which you may have.

We do not intend for this information to replace personal skills in the industry, but rather it is intended to compliment and enhance your business judgement. This same business judgment will assist you in determining which items of information will most fully benefit the ongoing operation of your business.

No guarantee, warranty or representation is made by Metco Landscape, Inc. as to the correctness or sufficiency of any information contained in this booklet. Metco Landscape, Inc. assumes no liability in connection with the use of this booklet. Nothing contained in this book shall be construed as a recommendation for any product or process.

## Newly Sodded Lawns

### Immediately Following Sodding:

- 1) New sod should be watered two to four times daily for the first two-three weeks. The sod should be kept damp.
- 2) All traffic across new sod should be kept to a minimum as it separates seams and disturbs the underlying grade.

### First Mowing:

- 1) The first mowing can usually occur about (3) weeks after installation, or when sod reaches a height of 3" to 3.5" tall.
- 2) Adjust mower height to approximately 2.5"-3" and be certain that blades are sharp.
- 3) Do not water the day before mowing as this will mat the new sod.
- 4) Repeat mowing procedures approximately once a week during the growing season. Do not remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade per mowing.

### Weeding/Fertilization:

- 1) After the first mowing, feed your new sod with a high nitrogen fertilizer. In later years, a pre-emergent should be used in early spring to keep the weeds to a minimum. After approximately two years, you may find it necessary to use a broadleaf herbicide to help control encroaching weeds.
- 2) At approximately (6) week intervals from April through October, fertilize your lawn with a well-balanced (20-10-5) fertilizer at the recommended rate. It is best to fertilize in two directions at ½ the recommended rate to assure proper coverage and overlap. Remember, more frequent, light applications will give better color than less frequent, heavy applications.

### General Notes:

- 1) Once established, a new lawn will perform better when watered heavily a fewer number of times rather than lightly a greater number of times. This promotes a deeper root growth and a healthier stand of grass.
- 2) Winter watering is important, especially the first year when the root system may not have fully developed. Water your lawn at least once every four weeks.
- 3) As your lawn gets older, you will need to aerate it in order to facilitate air movement as well as fertilizer and water intake. We recommend aerating your lawn at least once per year. Depending upon the traffic your lawn is receiving, aeration may be needed as soon as the second year and as often as two times per year.

## Newly Seeded Lawns

### Immediately Following Seeding:

- 1) Keep seed bed evenly moist at all times until most of the seed has germinated (approximately 10-21 days depending on the type of seed). Over-watering will cause erosion and drowning; drying between waterings may cause the seedlings to die.
- 2) Once the new lawn is up, reduce the watering slightly. Do not allow the seed bed to become excessively dry as it will stress the new seedlings.
- 3) Do not apply herbicides to the new lawn as these will burn the new seedlings (see “Weeding/Fertilizing”).

### First Mowings:

- 1) The first mowings can usually occur between three and four weeks after the seeding has taken place. Mow in alternating directions without catching clippings unless there is an abundance of flowering weeds.
- 2) After the first several mowings, you can begin to catch the clippings if you choose. Mow approximately once a week during the growing season at a height of about 2.5”.

### Weeding/Fertilization

- 1) After the grass plants have two leaves, you may want to apply a light application of a high phosphate fertilizer. If you start to see yellowing of seedlings, this also indicates it is time to fertilize.
- 2) After the first several mowings, the lawn is ready for an application of “weed and feed”. Be careful not to apply too much as this will burn the young lawn. A liquid spray application of a broadleaf herbicide can also be used (it will be more effective on weeds). Be sure to follow the directions on the label carefully.
- 3) At approximately six-week intervals fertilize your lawn with a well-balanced (20-10-5) fertilizer at the recommended rate. It is best to fertilize in two directions at the ½ recommended rate to assure proper coverage and overlap.
- 4) If weeds persist, mow them before they flower, making sure to catch all clippings. Also make several follow-up herbicide applications; spot spraying will probably be more effective and efficient.

### **General Notes:**

- 1) Do not be alarmed if weed should appear in your new lawn as this is perfectly normal. These weeds have come from seeds found in your soil or have been blown in.
- 2) Once established, a new lawn will perform better when watered heavily a fewer number of times, rather than lightly a greater number of times. This promotes deeper root growth and a healthier stand of grass.
- 3) Never remove more than 1/3 of the grass blade when mowing.
- 4) Winter watering is important, especially in the first year when the root system may not be fully developed. Water your lawn at least once every four weeks.
- 5) It will take approximately one year for your lawn to fill into a full turf area. Tender loving care can speed this process along.

## **Plant Material**

### Pruning and Trimming:

- 1) In general, prune or trim shrubs and trees just after their flowering period only as necessary. Remove any dead or dying branches.
- 2) Make all cuts clean.
- 3) Pruning will not generally be necessary for two to three years.

### Watering:

- 1) Winter watering is extremely important and should take place approximately every three weeks or when there are spells of dry, warm weather. Deep root watering on all trees is also good practice.
- 2) It is better to water heavily a fewer number of times than to water lightly a great number of times. Over-watering is the major cause of problems in plant material and is much more difficult to correct than under-watering.
- 3) Check soil moisture as often as possible to determine water needs of the plant. The soil should be moist, not wet.

### Fertilizing:

- 1) All plant material should be fertilized each Spring with a well balanced fertilizer.
- 2) All plant material should be treated with chelated iron approximately twice per growing season. This keeps the leaves from yellowing.
- 3) Insect problems should be corrected with insecticides as they are encountered. Weekly inspections should keep these in check; however, if insects are a problem, call for proper treatment.
- 4) Chewing insects (i.e., grasshoppers, etc.) can cause major damage quickly so must be taken care of as soon as possible. Weekly treatments may be necessary.

### Wrapping and Staking:

- 1) All deciduous trees should be wrapped from the soil surface to the first branch each fall (approximately November 1). Secure wrapping with masking tape or stretch-tie. Do not use electrical tape or string. Deciduous trees should be wrapped for the first four to five years after planting.
- 2) Remove wrapping after all chance of frost has passed, usually around April 1.
- 3) Remove Stakes after the second full season of growing.

### Perennial Flowers:

- 1) Perennials must be fertilized in order to perform well.
- 2) After perennials flower, the seed heads should be removed to promote plant growth instead of seed production.
- 3) Perennials should be cut back to the ground in late fall or early spring.
- 4) After several years, some perennials may need to be thinned or divided. A reduction in flower production is generally a good indicator that this needs to take place.

### General Notes:

- 1) DO NOT ignore your plant material. It has very specific needs that, if provided for, will keep it looking great for many years.
- 2) Follow all container directions carefully when fertilizing or treating for insects. Remember, “more is not always better”.



## Automatic Irrigation System

Your new underground irrigation system should provide you with many years of trouble-free operation providing these simple maintenance procedures are followed:

### Spring Start-up Procedures:

- 1) Close all drain valves located at each grouping of control valves.
- 2) Close all the petcocks on the vacuum breaker. This is the piece of equipment that appears above ground.
- 3) Close the drain located in the pit where the water line was “tapped”.
- 4) Open the supply valve very slowly. This valve is also located in the pit where the tap was made.
- 5) Open the ball valves on the vacuum breaker to energize the mainline. These should be opened slowly.
- 6) If your controller is equipped with a battery, replace it. Set the time, day and date. Program each station’s time according to the averages listed in Item #3 under “General Notes” (the following page).
- 7) Run through the entire system to assure proper working conditions and to check for leaks.

### Weekly Maintenance:

- 1) Inspect heads and nozzles for proper coverage and working condition.
- 2) Clean any dirty nozzles or filter screens.
- 3) Inspect components for damage due to lawn maintenance problems.

### Monthly Maintenance:

- 1) Perform all weekly procedures.
- 2) Adjust times on controller to compensate for different temperatures and precipitation each month.
- 3) Run through the controller to assure proper working condition.

#### Yearly Maintenance:

- 1) Perform all monthly procedures.
- 2) Inspect all components (heads, valves, etc.) to assure proper working condition.
- 3) Adjust heights of heads to accommodate fluctuations in turf height.
- 4) “Start-Up” and “Winterize” system (see detailed explanations).

#### Winterization Procedure:

- 1) Close the main supply.
- 2) Connect the air compressor to the service tee located on the vacuum breaker.
- 3) Turn the controller to the station #1 and start compressor.
- 4) Force air through station #1 until the water has been blown out. Continue the process through stations #2, #3, etc. until all stations have been blown out completely.
- 5) Open all drain valves and petcocks on the vacuum breaker.
- 6) Turn off the controller but allow to run so that lubricants stay on clock motors.
- 7) While your system can be drained without blowing it out, we recommend blowing it out with compressed air. This removes all water and relieves the stress that ice causes in our harsh climate.

#### General Notes:

- 1) It is important to repair any malfunctioning equipment as soon as possible especially during the hot mid-Summer months.
- 2) Check for spots that appear to be dry. The sooner these are corrected, the less damage there will be.
- 3) Spray heads apply more water than rotary heads in the same amount of time. Therefore, these stations will need to run for a shorter period of time. Average station times are as follows: Drip zones 45-60 minutes, Spray Zones 20-30 minutes, Rotary Zones 30-45 minutes. These times are only **averages** and will vary depending on the time of season, plant material type, wind and soil conditions.

### **Wood Mulch**

Your beds now have a layer of wood mulch on them. This mulch will move from the winds and decay thus will need to be replenished yearly. This mulch is very important in keeping weed growth down and maintaining optimum moisture around the plants.

### **Lighting System**

We recommend monthly inspections of your lighting system. You should check your timer to insure the time is correct and the operating times are appropriate for the season. Each light should also be checked to be sure that no bulbs are burned out.

### **Steel Edging**

Occasionally, frost may force edging to heave from the ground. If this should occur, the edging should be pounded back into the soil. We recommend using a block of wood on the top edge to prevent denting and damaging of the edging.

### **Rock Mulch**

As thoroughly as possible, remove organic material (dead leaves, grass clippings, etc.) from the rock mulch area. This will reduce possible weed growth. A hand-held blower is the best means to accomplish this.

## Monthly Checklist

### January:

- 1) Prune dead wood from trees and shrubs (except maples, birches and walnuts).
- 2) Conduct winter watering.

### February:

- 1) Spray with dormant oil.
- 2) Conduct winter watering.

### March:

- 1) Apply borer spray if you have a borer problem.
- 2) Conduct winter watering.

### April:

- 1) Prune roses to live wood.
- 2) Begin lawn mowing operations.
- 3) Apply crabgrass preventative.
- 4) Apply herbicide for dandelions.
- 5) Fertilize lawn.
- 6) Remove tree wrap.
- 7) Activate sprinkler system.

### May:

- 1) Install annuals.
- 2) Fertilize trees, shrubs and perennials.
- 3) Spray apples, crabs, pears, mountain ash and pyrachantha to prevent fire blight.
- 4) Feed roses.
- 5) Re-mulch beds.
- 6) Inspect sprinkler system operation/adjust timing as needed.

### June:

- 1) Fertilize Lawn.
- 2) Check all trees and shrubs for insect pests.
- 3) Continue mowing operations.
- 4) Feed roses
- 5) Inspect sprinkler system operation/adjust timing as needed.

**July:**

- 1) Check for lawn fungi.
- 2) Fertilize lawn.
- 3) Prune shrubs after flowering.
- 4) Continue mowing operations.
- 5) Head back annuals.
- 6) Inspect sprinkler system operation/adjust timing as needed.

**August:**

- 1) Continue mowing operations.
- 2) Head back annuals.
- 3) Inspect sprinkler system/operation/adjust timing as needed.

**September:**

- 1) Fertilize lawn.
- 2) Continue mowing operations.
- 3) Head back annuals.
- 4) Inspect sprinkler system operation/adjust timing as needed.

**October:**

- 1) Clean off tops of dried perennials.
- 2) Plant fall bulbs.
- 3) Adjust staking of new trees.
- 4) Head back annuals.
- 5) Reduce watering times on sprinkler system.

**November:**

- 1) Mulch roses and tender perennials.
- 2) Wrap trees.
- 3) Drain (blow out) sprinkler system.
- 4) Remove annuals.

**December:**

- 1) Conduct winter watering.