

**Third in a Series**

## *Sod Farmers' Secrets For A Fabulous Lawn*

“How do you grow such beautiful grass?” is the first question asked by visitors to turfgrass sod farms. It's acre after acre of fabulous grass so uniform you could bowl on it. Then, you return home and look at your own yard and wonder what you can do to have a beautiful, healthy and environmentally positive lawn.

To reveal the “secrets of their success,” the not-for-profit Turf Resource Center headquartered in suburban Chicago contacted a number of leading turf producers and received the following insights and unique tips to growing a fabulous lawn:

“Cheap seed is the most expensive seed you can buy! Judging seed by its price tag is a great recipe for disaster. Homeowners should take the time to select the right turf varieties for their area, using the best quality of sod or seed possible. If it's seed, look at the tag and see how much weed seed, crop seed and inert matter is in the bag. If the variety line says ‘VNS’ it means ‘variety not stated.’ It could contain anything, but probably not quality seed. If you start your lawn with problem seed, you'll fight a problem lawn forever.”

“Core aeration is the key to your lawn's deep roots and long life. It should be done every year, with a hollow tine core aerator, run in two or three directions. So long as the soil is moist enough to allow extraction of two to three inch cores, aeration can be done anytime...winter, spring, summer or fall. When you're done aerating, leave the cores, they will soon break up and return to the soil. The new holes give plants room to breath and allows the roots to go deeper, as thatch decomposition is hastened.”

*Randy Tischer  
Green Velvet Sod Farms  
Bellbrook, OH*

“Moderate temperatures and moderate moisture are key factors to improved success with lawn care chemicals...here's why: Most plants and insects tend to ‘close down’ or become inactive during times of extreme heat, cold, moisture or drought...even for just parts of a day when it's particularly hot or cold. Moderate temperatures and moisture are key factors to the success of herbicide or insecticide use.”

*Ben Copeland, Sr.  
Patten Seed/Super Sod  
Lakeland, GA*

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“Raise mowing heights for the peak of summer and the depth of winter. Longer leaf surfaces help to protect the grass plants...in the summer by reducing soil-moisture loss...in the winter by providing insulation. For cool-season grasses this probably means a maximum cutting height of 3 to 3 ½ inches.”

“If your lawn looks like it’s dying a day or two after you’ve mown it, check your mower blades...they probably need sharpening. A sharp blade cleanly cuts the grass blade, leaving only a minor opening that heals quickly. However, a dull blade shreds the grass blades so that upon close examination, the ends look like frayed material. This frayed end turns brown, giving the appearance that the lawn is dying. It’s not, but it sure is suffering. Sharpen the blade.”

If ever you have an oil spill on your grass...maybe your lawn mower leaks or someone parked on your lawn and oil leaked...Coke or Pepsi may be the answer. Old-timers tell us that as soon as you notice the damage, pour a gallon of Coke or Pepsi (not the diet variety because you want the sugar content), into a hose-end or pump-up sprayer; spray the soft-drink with mild pressure on the oily surface and then water heavily. Apparently, the carbonated drink helps to breakdown the soils and the sugars help the plant and soil microbes to revive. The lawn may suffer some damage, but it could come back.”

*Doug Barberry  
Aldino Sod Farms, Inc.  
Churchville, MD*

For more information about caring for your lawn and the environment, visit the website of Turfgrass Producers International...the not-for-profit trade association for turfgrass sod farmers at [www.TurfGrassSod.org](http://www.TurfGrassSod.org).

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