

Two of the biggest lawn care issues in South Florida are the high heat and lack of water. These problems are compounded by watering restrictions in most areas. Providing the lawn year-round care will help it holdup to the South Florida climate.

**Selecting the proper heat and drought tolerant grass** is very important. Not all grasses will stand up to the heat of South Florida summers. Common grasses used are St. Augustine grass, Zoysia grass, Bahia grass and Bermuda grass which are all heat tolerant and well suited for South Florida heat.

**Water** is an issue in South Florida because of the hot, dry weather and watering restrictions in most areas. Grass needs frequent watering during the hot summer months which fortunalty is the rainy season here. A good strategy is to water only when necessary, but this often isn't possible due to assigned watering days during restricted times. Watering deeply and less frequently encourages the roots to grow deeper and helps the plant tolerate drought and heat better. Water in the morning when the plants are actively taking in water. In the heat of the day, more water is lost to evaporation and at night the water stays on the foliage longer and may encourage fungal diseases.

Give the lawn approximately *3/4 inch of water in the morning one day a week*. Increase watering to two days per week during the hottest parts of the summer. A good indicator is to look for your footprints when you walk across the lawn. If your footprints are visible, the lawn needs water.

**Selecting the Correct Fertilizer** is important and again consulting a local professional is always a good idea. Many suggest using a high nitrogen fertilizer on the lawn during the spring through fall but you should not use fertilizer during periods of drought. Dispense fertilizer on dry grass and water immediately after. Fertilizers with some or all of the nitrogen available in a time-release form are best. Supplement the lawn with an iron spray if the soil pH is greater than 7.0.

**Control Weeds** by using herbicides that are labeled for the specific grass variety you have to prevent weeds. In south Florida, there are plenty of weeds like dollar weed that can be difficult to control. Keep up with it and dont let the growth overwhelm your grass. Keeping the lawn thick and healthy can help reduce weed issues. You may apply pre-emergent herbicides late January or early February. Use post-emergent herbicides throughout the summer, whenever the temperature is below 85 degrees F and the grass has been receiving plenty of moisture.

**Control Insects** in your lawn. Chinch bugs are a major source of damage to South Florida lawns, causing yellowing, browning and eventually dead spots in the grass. Check for chinch bugs by cutting both ends off of a metal coffee can and pushing it halfway into the ground at the edge of a suspected area. Fill with water and wait five minutes. The beetle-like chinch bugs will float up to the surface of the water. Control chinch bugs with repeated applications of insecticide. You may also have fireants to contend with. Make sure you treat them with the proper insecticides or hire a professional.

**South Florida lawns need mowing** year-round and during the summer you may find that mowing once or twice a week is required. IYou will find that in the winter months which is also the dry season, mowing every few weeks will typically be adaaquate. Never remove more than 1/3 of the blade in a single mowing. Mow long grass tall, then mow shorter a few days later.