

Lawns of plumbers



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My lawn is not in good shape this fall. A hot, dry summer coupled with no spring overseeding or aeration, not to mention the divots I take while practicing my golf swing, have taken their toll. Luckily I live on the side of an Appalachian mountain where no one can see my mess just by driving by, though a few friends tease me about not using “inside” information from my job to produce a healthier result.

So I asked some turf managers what shape their lawns are in this fall:

“It’s actually in pretty good condition considering the frequent summer rains in Florida, followed by periods of drought, water restrictions that limit watering to one day per week, and my dogs that like to use the yard as their own personal playground (and restroom),” says Phil Whitehouse, the manager for athletic operations for the City of St. Petersburg.

“Like doctors who smoke and plumbers with leaky faucets, I have a yard at home that adds nothing to my credibility as a turf professional,” says Bob Studholme, a park manager for Fairfax County, VA. “In fact, just the opposite is probably true. As a general rule, I do not irrigate the lawn, using supplemental water only after seeding and for my ornamental beds, and keep the nutrition and weed management bare-boned. Exasperating as this is in my area we’re still in the throes of an unseasonably warm, very dry weather pattern. In my ‘lawn,’ at least the crabgrass and other summer annuals are still in decent shape. On the plus side, I’ve only had to mow every 3 weeks or so!”

“I’m one that puts the home lawn in the low maintenance category,” says Mike McDonald, CSFM, the turf manager at the University of Minnesota. “Mow at the most once a week, during the summer it could go to 3 weeks. I will not mow it if it is dry conditions or until it rains, unless we can’t find lost shoes in it. Fertilize once a year, maybe twice every other year. Hand spray or pick a few weeds. Water just enough so it doesn’t turn all brown.

“So in other words I do as little as possible, enough to keep it just behind the neighbors’ so as not to embarrass the block. It’s looking pretty good right now, we had about 6 inches of rain in the last month.”

“As the saying goes, the cobbler’s kids go barefoot, and the plumber’s faucet leaks. My lawn is the last thing that gets any attention at my house,” says Chris McGinty, superintendent of park maintenance, Framingham, MA. “My wife laughs when people ask me for advice, saying for someone who does this for a living you wouldn’t know it from our house.

“Doesn’t Kentucky Blue turn green around October 15?”

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