

Lawns are a feature of almost every property. They provide a space to play, to relax and to enjoy the company of family and friends.

With a few judicious practices, your lawn can look its best and have a minimal weed problem.

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Why do weeds infest lawns?

The best remedy against weeds is to grow a dense and healthy lawn. Weeds grow best under specific conditions. They prefer dry, compacted soils with low fertility. Improving the turf and soil conditions creates an inhospitable environment for weeds, which will become weaker and less competitive.

Dandelion

This common weed of lawns is recognized by its yellow flower. It grows best in situations of thin grass and low mowing height. Manually remove by cutting the root at least 5 cm below the soil surface. Overseed bare spots with grass seeds.



Black medic

This low-growing plant with yellow flowers can spread rapidly in a lawn kept dry and with low fertility. Roots are thick and difficult to pull. Hand weed early in the season and overseed in the fall to minimize encroachment.

White clover

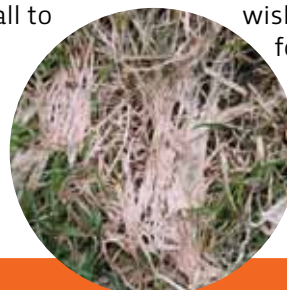
A perennial plant with clusters of white to pink flowers that can fix nitrogen. It is seen on sites of low fertility and low irrigation. Dig out all attached creeping root stems.

Crabgrass

It has wide blades and bunch-like appearance. It is seen where the lawn is thin or mowed low. Hand pull in early summer and overseed in the fall to promote a thicker lawn.

Pink snow mold, a disease of lawns

Pink snow mold (picture to right) is most often seen after



snow melt. The fungus is active in the fall during cool, wet weather. When the snow melts in the spring, the infected areas appear as reddish-tan to white spots.

Many practices in the fall help reduce snow mold. In the fall, eliminate moist shaded areas on the lawn: rake the fallen leaves and mow the long grass blades. Break up snow piles in late winter. Pesticide treatment is usually not necessary at home.

Leatherjacket, an insect pest in lawns

Leatherjacket is the young stage of the crane fly. The adult, or “crane fly”, is similar to a large mosquito (picture below). It is most often seen in late summer. Damage is caused by the young grubs feeding on grass roots. They are greyish, 1 to 4 cm in length.



Most lawns can tolerate leatherjacket damage. Maintain a healthy lawn to offset the damage. Avoid any pesticide treatment unless the presence of grubs is confirmed and numbers are very high.

About using pesticides

Some weeds can become established even in healthy lawns. Learn to tolerate a few weeds in areas used for picnics or leisure activities. Use non-pesticide methods when possible. This includes hand removing occasional weeds and mowing before weed flowers go to seeds.

Avoid using combination products. If you wish to fertilize, purchase a product for that purpose. Avoid buying a product that contains both fertilizer and herbicide, as it results in unnecessary use of the pesticide and is not permitted by the Pesticide Bylaw.

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Seek help for severe lawn problems. Lawns in very poor condition may require a complete make-over. Important lawn diseases are occasionally found in the region. For the best course of action, consult with a garden center or a certified pesticide applicator.

Mow high and mow often. Most lawns perform better when mowed 6 to 9 cm high (2.5 to 3.5 inches). When cut too short, the grass is weaker and less competitive against weeds. Ensure the mower has sharp blades and leave the clippings on the lawn.

Provide deep, infrequent watering. Encourage roots to grow deeper in the soil. The lawn becomes more tolerant of drought periods. Grass naturally goes brown during the summer.

Spread good compost over the lawn. A healthy lawn comes from a healthy soil. Make an application 0.5 to 1.0 cm deep. Apply ahead of rainfall or irrigation to help the product move into the root zone. Use good compost free of weed seeds.

Aerate (picture to right) to reduce soil compaction. Where the lawn is extensively used, the soil becomes hard and unfavourable to grass. Reduce this compaction with a core aerator.



Spread grass seeds over the existing lawn. A thick lawn is the best prevention against weeds. Use grass seeds appropriate for your site to cover bare areas or the whole lawn. Spread before rain in mid-April or September.

Kelowna's Pesticide Regulation Bylaw No. 9920

The City of Kelowna's Pesticide Bylaw, passed in January 2009, regulates the use of pesticides for non-essential (cosmetic) purposes.

Pesticides are products used to control unwanted weeds, fungi and insects. Under the Pesticide Bylaw, most pesticides cannot be applied on a residential property.

Least-toxic pesticides on the "excluded list" are exempt from the restrictions of the Bylaw. Certified pesticide applicators are also exempt from the restrictions of the bylaw.

To view the entire bylaw and pesticides on the "excluded list", refer to kelowna.ca/environment, under Pesticide Free.