

Reduce gasoline use in your yard

With gas prices increasing there are practical ways to reduce gasoline use in your own backyard.

There are electric, battery and solar powered lawnmowers. Do you remember the non-motorized reel mower? Or you could use a sheep. But most of us have gasoline powered mowers. On average, it takes one gallon of gasoline to mow an acre. There are approximately 5 million acres of home lawns in Florida. Mowing each of these lawns twenty times per year would result in the use of 100 million gallons of gas per year. That's 400 million dollars at \$4 per gallon gas. These are conservative figures.

Be smart as to where you grow grass. Use grass where it serves a purpose. Concentrate your efforts in growing grass where it will grow. It's normal for lawns to decline in close proximity to large trees. As a lawn gives way to tree competition, do something else in that area. Use mulch under trees or plant shade tolerant plants.

Fertilize smart. Lawns need fertilizer. But too much fertilizer, particularly too much nitrogen, results in excessive grass growth that requires more mowing.

Most homeowners overdo it with too much nitrogen and too little potassium. Fertilizers with the correct ratios of nitrogen and potassium will produce the right balance of shoot to root growth. Choose a fertilizer such as 15-2-15 or some similar analysis with slow release nitrogen. Fertilize to produce adequate growth and the correct color. If your lawn is a healthy green and you're mowing, mowing, mowing, why add more fertilizer?

Centipede and Bahia will grow best with fewer problems when fertilized only once or twice per year - once after green-up in spring and possibly a second application during summer. St. Augustine might get by on one spring application; however, it's more common to apply a second application during summer.

Never apply more than the recommended amount of fertilizer per application. But you can always split the total amount into two or more applications, which will produce more even growth and minimize sudden growth spurts.

Reconsider overseeding your lawn with ryegrass this fall. Weigh the desire to have a green lawn through winter with the extra time and costs (gas, fertilizer, water, pesticides, etc.) involved with maintaining it.

Finally, keep your gas powered lawnmower in good working condition. It can make a difference in how efficiently it operates. Make sure the equipment is clean. Change the oil, if needed. Replace or clean the air filter and spark plug. Keep lawnmower blades sharp. Basically, follow the owner's manual for routine maintenance.

Implementing these ideas will help conserve fuel and result in a healthier lawn.

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