

Your Yard

Avoiding Lawn Care's Biggest Blunders

(NAPSA)—There's good news if it seems the grass is always greener on your neighbor's side of the fence.

Experts say anyone can grow a healthy, green lawn by learning the basics—and avoiding the five most common lawn care mistakes.

According to Trey Rogers, Ph.D., professor of turfgrass science at Michigan State University and the Briggs & Stratton Corporation's "Yard Doctor," "You don't have to spend several days of work each month to get a good-looking, healthy lawn." He says if you do the basics right—and avoid the biggest blunders—you're on your way to having a great lawn you can be proud of.

Rogers recommends avoiding these common lawn care mistakes:

- A dull lawn mower blade. Have your lawn mower blade professionally sharpened once a year. A dull blade chops the grass rather than making a clean cut. A choppy cut stresses the lawn, exposing it to disease and pests.

- Cutting the grass too short. Don't try to achieve the look of a putting green in your yard. Follow the one-third rule: Cut only one-third of the grass blade in any single mowing. This keeps your grass healthy by allowing it to form stronger roots and squeeze out weeds that try to grow in.

- Watering at the wrong time. Don't water the lawn during the heat of the day because the water will evaporate before it sinks in. Early-morning watering is best. Watering the lawn at night can encourage mold and mildew, adding to lawn stress and disease.

- Applying too much or too lit-



Don't try to achieve the look of a putting green in your yard. You'll get stronger roots and less weeds if you cut only 1/3 of the grass blade each time you mow.

tle fertilizer. If some fertilizer is good, more isn't necessarily better. Too much fertilizer can burn the lawn or cause it to grow too rapidly, adding to your mowing time. Skipping the fertilizer deprives your lawn of a nutrition boost that helps it grow strong and stay healthy. Follow all package directions.

- Battling weeds at the wrong time. If you have lots of dandelions in spring and early summer, the best time to kill them was last fall. Broad-leaf weeds such as dandelions are most easily managed by applying a "postemergent" herbicide in fall. Grassy weeds like crabgrass can be killed in spring with a "pre-emergent" herbicide.

Briggs & Stratton Corporation is the largest manufacturer of small, air-cooled engines for outdoor power equipment, including lawn mowers, pressure washers and generators.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.yarddoctor.com.