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## Use Care Whhen Choosing Lawn Care

Dennis Hinkamp  
*Utah State University*

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## GARDEN NOTES

# USE CARE WHEN CHOOSING LAWN CARE

*By Dennis Hinkamp*

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Even though the ground is still covered with snow in many places, people are starting to think about lawn care. In about six months they will be praying for snow. Go figure.

“I receive many calls asking me to recommend a lawn care company,” says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. “As an Extension employee I cannot recommend a specific business, but I can say there are a few businesses who do it just for the money. They really don’t care how the lawn looks once they leave the property, as long as the check comes in the mail.”

So, how do you decide which company will do a good, dependable job in your yard?

Goodspeed gives these suggestions for choosing a lawn care company:

1) One of the best things to do when choosing a company is to find out what kind of service they have given to neighbors and friends who have used them. You can always ask for references, then check with these customers to find out if they have been happy with the service in the past. If the company is proud of their work, this should not be a problem.

2) It’s a good idea to ask the company how they schedule their lawn care practices. Some companies charge strictly by the number of times they come onto your property. For reference, most lawns need to be fertilized about every six to eight weeks - or four times a year. If the company is applying a slow release product, it only needs to be done every three months. A pre-emergent herbicide to control annual weeds should be put on the lawn about the first week in April, and again sometime around the first part of June. These are often applied with a fertilizer application. Because weather and available time do not always cooperate, this timing can fluctuate a week or two one way or the other.

3) A broadleaf weed control application may be applied in the spring or the fall, but normally it is part of one of the fertilizer applications. If there is a severe weed infestation, the whole lawn may need to be treated. Otherwise, spot treatment can eliminate a few offending weeds.

4) There are very few diseases in northern Utah that seriously affect turf. It is seldom

necessary to apply a fungicide, and I never recommend one as a preventative. The two or three diseases that do occur can be best handled with correct watering and cultural practices.

5) Three major insects invade turf. Two of them are below the thatch, and one is above. If you have never had a major problem with insects, don't worry about it. A preventative spray is not necessary. If your lawn has had some grubs or other insect problems in the past, consider applying a preventative spray in June, knowing it may not even be necessary.

6) My own opinion of preventative sprays for most trees and shrubs is that they're a waste of time and product. Most borers are hard to control with a spray program, and many other insects do not warrant spraying. So, if someone checks your landscape and tells you that your whole yard will die if it is not sprayed - be leery. Do a little research, and get a second opinion. It may just be a line to sell a product or spray.

7) Don't be afraid to ask questions. Most businesses are glad to explain their program. If it sounds like it's too much, it just might be. Remember, there are some great companies out there. Don't allow one to treat you poorly and do little to help your landscape. Shop for a service that is knowledgeable and will take good care of your yard.

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