

The Well-Stocked Tool Shed¹

Factsheet

1. Mower

Lawn mowers may be reel mowers or rotary mowers. Reel mowers may be powered by pushing or by gasoline engines. They are best for fine textured grasses and low mowing heights on even ground. Rotary mowers are driven by gasoline or electric motors and are best for higher mowing heights. Mulching mowers blow clippings back onto the lawn, where they can feed the soil. We recommend a mulching mower. Look for ease of use, ease of adjusting the height of mower blades, and ease of maintenance.

2. Seeder

You'll need to broadcast the seed for a new lawn, and overseeding is an important part of lawn maintenance. Small areas can be seeded by hand, but for larger areas, seed broadcasters can help achieve more uniform distribution of seeds. They range from the handheld rotary spreader to the spreaders that can be pushed across the lawn or pulled behind a tractor.

3. Compost spreader or shovel, rake, and wheelbarrow or garden cart

Compost can be spread over the lawn in many ways. On many lawns throwing a shovelful at a time from a wheelbarrow, then raking to even out the distribution will work fine. Choose a shovel that is comfortable for you to use. For digging, it should have a rounded point rather than a square end. A garden rake is a heavy-duty implement that is used for moving and smoothing soil and compost. Wheelbarrows and garden carts come in many shapes and sizes. Garden carts with large wheels are more stable, can be pulled as well as pushed, and require less strength to handle. Wheel barrows can maneuver more easily in small areas and over rough ground.

For larger lawns, some will find a compost spreader with a hopper that can be pushed or pulled across the lawn to be useful. However, compost does not feed as evenly as seed or chemical fertilizer, and cheaper spreaders will prove to be frustrating. Commercial lawn care providers are likely to use more expensive motorized spreaders.

4. Aerator

A core aerator is an essential for the lawn enthusiast. Aerators may be in the form of spikes that push soil aside or core aerators that pull out cores of soil. While spike aerators may work in sandy soils, core aerators are essential where the soil is clayey. Manual core aerators work well, but take a long time to cover a lawn. Power core aerators are available for rental.

5. Soil moisture meter

Watering according to need rather than a schedule is a lot more efficient. A soil moisture meter will let you know when the water has penetrated to a depth of 4-6 inches. Be sure the meter is at least 6 inches long.

6. Sprinkler

¹ Check your local hardware store or nursery for supplies. For more information, see the Plant Nurseries and Landscaping Resources, in the [Further Resources Factsheet](#).

When choosing a sprinkler, take into account the area to be watered, the soil type, and the rate of water flow. On clay soils, if the sprinkler delivers the water too fast, it will run off. Impulse sprinklers water a large area slowly. Oscillating and rotary sprinklers deliver water faster.

7. Hose

Don't buy a cheap hose. Buy one made of high-grade rubber, laminated filament, or other quality material, that rolls up easily in any weather and doesn't kink.

8. Compost tea brewer

Compost tea is easier to apply than compost, feeds beneficial organisms on both leaves and in the soil, and provides a potent boost to microbes in the soil. Compost tea brewers are available for sale, and plans are available online. The essential aspect is that the tea be kept aerated as it is brewed.

9. Dethatching rake

A healthy lawn should not require dethatching. If you are making a transition from a heavily fertilized lawn without healthy organic soil, you may need a dethatching rake.

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