

Reviving Your Kikuyu Lawn: A South Australian Guide

Welcome! We are so glad you joined us! Here is your one stop shop lawn eBook!

This ebook is designed to be concise, compendious and give you every ounce of information you require to take you from 'just starting', to 'full swing dad mode' who knows, you might even pick up golf. Saying that, this ebook, if it doesn't cover everything you're looking for, it should give you enough to be able to research it yourself.

Prior to starting, let me introduce myself, my Name is Josh, and I am nuts about a good lawn. I've been doing lawn care and garden maintenance for over 4 years now and learnt stacks along the way, so I wanted to give back.

I enjoy the outdoors, camping, the cozy winters wood-fire after a cold rainy day. I love the beach and also my cars. I enjoy reading and piano in the spare time I have. Not to forget going for a run or a trip to the gym, just because my job isn't physically exhausting enough! Enough about me, let's fix that lawn!



Kikuyu grass is a popular choice for South Australian lawns due to its drought tolerance, rapid growth, and resilience to foot traffic. However, factors like compacted soil, nutrient deficiencies, and seasonal changes can lead to a brown, weedy, and a chore of a lawn. This eBook, produced by *Soil and Stone Gardening and Contracting*, provides a comprehensive roadmap to rejuvenate your home lawn, from basic care, seasonal restoration and advanced restoration techniques for the avid lawnie.

Chapter 1 – The Foundations of Growing and Maintenance

Introduction:

Lawns are a magnificent addition to the overall presentation of your house. The reality is - It's easier than you think, the result you're chasing is in small efforts of regular attention. This chapter is all about the foundations, some of this elementary yet horticultural gold you may already know, but as a complete guide, this is where we start!

Like any plant, a lawn needs three key things to grow; Water, Sunlight and Nutrients. Without any one of these three, you have no chance at having the best lawn on the street.

1.1 Mowing

Regular mowing encourages dense growth and prevents thatch buildup. During active growth seasons, mow weekly, maintaining a height of 25–35mm. In winter, reduce mowing frequency as growth slows, and raise height to 35-40mm to retain colour and reduce disease pressure.

When mowing, it should be cut on the same height each time, this allows the lawn to reach a height and stick to it, known as 'training your lawn' its best to cut off no more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the leaf in a mow.

1.2 Watering

Deep, infrequent watering promotes deep root systems. Water mature Kikuyu lawns every 7–10 days, ensuring the soil remains moist but not waterlogged. The amount of water required is dependent on the health of your turf, and surrounding temperatures. It is recommended to apply 12-25mm of water per week. Through warmer, dry seasons, this may be above 25mm per week, to make up for evaporation, but these rates are only a recommendation. The application can be tested with a flat wide container, minimum 25mm deep, such as a tuna tin or take away containers. Simply place them on the lawn in various locations, and record how long it takes to fill them 25mm deep.

Watering should be done early mornings as opposed to evenings, to reduce disease pressure (fungal) from being wet overnight. If possible, A short cycle can be programmed in (5 minutes) on the non-watering days, to remove any frost/dew that may have formed overnight. This is set 15 minutes prior to sunrise.

1.3 Fertilising

A large component of curating your deep vibrant green lawn is the choice of fertiliser. Let's break this down.

Fertilisers are a crucial part to not only the initial colour, health and vibrancy of your lawn, but also the longer term health of the soil. Cheap, big name fertilisers can cause major problems in soil acidification, salinity, killing off soil microbes and further degrading the soil. As a thank you for reading this far, we'd like to offer you 10% storewide at *Hough Turf and Garden Supplies*. Use code **SoilandStone10** for 10% off. Hough's offer the full range of fertiliser and granular products required to keep your lawn looking mickey-mouse year round. In fertilisers, A few elements and their roles which need to be understood are:

MacroNutrients: (The main ones)

Nitrogen (N) The main active growth element, usually the highest percentage, and is responsible for colour, and chlorophyll production, for photosynthesis.

Phosphorus (P): Key for root growth, nutrient intake, cell growth, traffic resistance

Potassium (K): stress resistance, thicker cell walls for increased resistance

MicroNutrients:

Iron (Fe): deep, healthy, vibrant green colour, without the active growth

The key to maximising growth at the right time is correct application rates of fertiliser.

Apply a high-nitrogen fertiliser such as a *post reno-revival* at the start of spring to kick off the growing season, through the growing season, it is recommended to stick to the application rates on the package. A slow release fertiliser such as *spring and summer bloom* results in a steady growth through the season, without requiring continuous weekly application. Apply a dose of *winter ready fertiliser* at the beginning of autumn to boost growth and sustain colour through the dormant months.

Over fertilising leads to excessive growth, which is cut off when you mow. Although it results in vivid eye-catching colour, there are other methods, such as iron (Fe) which yields colour without the wasteful growth.

The fertiliser blend is written as Nitrogen : Potassium : Phosphorus + Fe, and shows you the blend between the three (or more) elements.

1.4 Weed Control

If your lawn contains more weeds than grass, start with a product such as 'Bow n Arrow' 'Kamba M' or 'Bin-die' these products contain either Dicamba or MCPA. Do not spray glyphosate on your lawn as it will kill off the lawn, and most likely; not the weeds.

Another product which can be applied is 'Spartan.' This is a Pre-Emergent, and kills the unwanted seed off as it germinates. This means you don't see ANY weeds in your lawn. And better yet, because it kills the seeds off as it germinates, it reduces the quantity of future weeds also. Spartan has a working life of 6 months, and should be applied in April and October. (Start of Autumn and Spring)

If you have a particular weed you're looking at taking care of, you can use a photo plant identifier app on your phone, then a simple google search to find a selective herbicide that can tackle it.

At this point your lawn may not be the *Royal Adelaide Golf Course* but it certainly will look much better than before. It should be low, tight, green, fresh, weed free and certainly attract some eyes. But the game doesn't end there, truth be told, it's only just beginning.

1.5 Lawn care Through the Seasons

Through the year, the aim is to use winter and spring to set up for the following summer. This will be covered in depth later on, but it sets the tone and focus for your ease of reading.

Beginning in winter, this is the highest natural rainfall. But contrary to belief, it is also the slowest growth rate. This is due to decreased soil and air temperatures as well as frost and dew, which can burn the leaf, and remove colour. As photosynthesis is an endothermic reaction, it causes a reduction of external temperature. This means if the air/soil temperature is cold, the reaction will slow, and hence growth. Therefore the focus in winter is to retain as much colour as possible, manage weeds and improve soil structure with gypsum, ph adjustments and overall composition for the warmer months.

In spring, the temperatures are rising. And so will growth. Without the scorching sun above and a generous rainfall, the lawn has the ability to provide new growth without seeing any setbacks. Complete the lawn renovation or install new turf at this time.

In summer, the aim is to protect colour with adequate water, fertiliser and mowing. Try to cut off maximum 30% of the leaf, fertilise every 4-6 weeks and apply 25mm of water a week, but don't be afraid to wind that up if there is a hot week.

In autumn, the growth will reduce, colour and turf density will increase and allows preparation for winter. You'll want to apply a last dose of fertiliser prior to winter and raise your cutting height to reduce frost pressure and retain colour.

These are all gone into more depth later on.

Chapter 2 – Advanced Restoration Techniques - 'The Lawn Reno'

Introduction:

Now that you have the maintenance regime covered - it's time to get into the fun stuff! - The attention that transforms your good lawn - into a *GREAT* lawn and making people think you're crazy when you start 'mowing your artificial lawn'

After a season of intense management, the soil can compact, and can build up a layer called *thatch*. This layer is a mix of soil and dead grass material, which inhibits water and nutrient intake, and should be removed at the start of every season for your Best lawn in the next year. It can also cause the lawn to build height over time, and feel spongy underfoot. At the start of the season, in early spring, a process called a *renovation* is undergone. This resets the lawn and gives it the best opportunity for the following season.

To undergo a lawn renovation, follow the steps below!

2.1 Scalping

The number 1 step is to remove the lawn, one pass of the mower at a time. Scalping involves mowing the lawn lower than your usual mowing height to remove dead material, reset your height of cut and encourage new growth. A mid season scalp can be done if the lawn starts to get spongy/ too tall.



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At the start of the season, usually in October, your lawn should be scalped back as hard as your mower can go, ultimately - to the point where you can see dirt.

This is done with a rotary mower - more on this in chapter 7 beware! Your sharp blades will not come out alive. They will be blunt as a ruler. So make sure you've got another pair ready to install!

2.2 Dethatching/scarifying



Next is to break up and remove that layer of thatch. You can use a scarifier or dethatching rake. The dethatching rake can be bought from any hardware store, or hire a scarifier from a hire company such as Kennards. A 4 hr hire isn't usually more than \$150.

Along with scalping, this is the single best way to rejuvenate a lawn that doesn't respond to water or nutrients, irrespective of how much fertiliser, water or love you give it.

Scarifying uses a series of vertical blades on a rod spaced roughly 25mm apart. They rip into the lawn, through all of the runners, and into the soil, flicking up the dead grass and thinning it out. The light organic matter flies up, sits on top and the soil falls back down. If this is the first time you have scalped and scarified a lawn, beware - you will remove so much more material than you realise! And make sure you mark your sprinkler heads, they will not stand a chance against a scarifier. You can mark them with a piece of fencing wire, wrapped with a flag of duct tape. When you scarify, go in two directions, perpendicular.

2.2 Aeration/Coring

Aerating the soil alleviates compaction, allowing nutrient penetration down into the rootzone. done using a petrol lawn corer also hired for the under 20 sqm, a manual pitchfork style corer can from experience, use a petrol corer, you'll thank that follow.

If the soil is too hard, gypsum can be applied to softening process. Gypsum takes roughly 4 the soil, so bear that in mind prior to starting any have a heavy clay soil, you may need to apply it September to ensure it does its job in time.

rates on the packaging, they usually recommend a different dosage depending on the hardness of the soil.

When coring, the recommended depth is 50-75mm, and the cores should self clear while you're walking along, leaving a minefield of holes and plugs, rake these up and they can either go in the bin, or be used to propagate another section of lawn. More on propagation later,



better water and Lawn coring can be day. If your lawn is be used. But talking yourself over the days

commence the weeks to start altering of the renovation, if you over August and Follow the application

2.3 Top Dressing



Apply a 5-10mm layer of sandy loam (80/20 topdressing blend) to even out the lawn surface and improve soil structure. This is done after core aerating. The loam can then be pushed into the holes from coring. If the soil is a heavier clay, apply a thicker layer of 10-15mm which will slowly blend with the top layer, and assist in lawn coverage and spreading.

To spread the top dressing sand, take a moderate sized shovel load, and with one hand up the top, and the other by the shovel head, flick it across in an underarm tennis style motion, creating a crescent shaped pattern of sand in front of you. The idea is to flick it, allowing the sand to spread and bounce around and into the holes. Spread it as evenly as possible, covering part of your lawn.

Once the sandy loam is spread, take a levelling rake and brush over the top, pushing the sand further into the holes, and levelling out the high/low spots, ensuring all the holes, dips and bumps are levelled out.

To calculate the quantity required, use this formula:

$$(\text{Area of Lawn}) \times (0.01 + (\text{Depth of sand in Metres})) \times 1.5 = (\text{Weight in tonnes})$$

For example, if you had 50 sqm @ 10mm it would look like this:

$$(50) \times (0.01 + 0.01) \times 1.5 = 1.5 \text{ tonnes}$$

This accounts for the density of sand, the depth, total size and the coring holes also.

Once your lawn is renovated, apply a high nitrogen, fast release fertiliser, and water it more often than usual. The first 4-6 weeks will require more love than usual to bring it back to life.

You can mow it for the first time when the lawn reaches 50mm tall or 50% coverage.

Chapter 3: Pest, Weed and Disease Management

The unfortunate catch with fixing your lawn and the soil, is that it becomes a perfect home for pests, and the nutrients and moisture create a perfect home for fungus' and diseases too.

- Lawn Grubs/army worm/black beetle: These pests create dry/dead patches that stop growing irrespective of the amount of water/ fertiliser applied. This is prevented with acelepryn. To get rid of existing pests, use a product containing bifenthrin.
- Fungal Diseases: Watch out for discolouration, unusual spots, or patches. This is often caused by similar conditions to moss.
- Moss indicates over saturation, insufficient sunlight and poor drainage. This can be tackled with a ferrous sulphate product.

Chapter 4: Soil Amendments and Products

- Gypsum
 - Gypsum has numerous benefits, it both softens hard clay soils, improving drainage and alleviating compaction, but due to its composition, the calcium improves nutrient uptake in the lawn. Gypsum also displaces sodium from the soil and decreases soil salinity.
- Humic acid
 - Humic acid increases nutrient and water holding in the soil, it improves soil health, boosting microbial activity
- Wetting agent
 - Wetting agents break down the surface tension and act as a surfactant. Allowing water to penetrate the soil, down into the root zone, increasing water availability to the lawn.
- Soil acidity
 - Soil acidity can be tested for with a basic test kit from Bunnings. Aim for an acidity of 6.0 to 7.0.
 - If your soil is too acidic, you can raise the pH by adding sulphur, or lower the pH by adding lime (Calcium Carbonate)
- Kelp/ seaweed
 - Acts as a soil conditioner, microbial stimulator and natural fertiliser, enriching the soil with essential nutrients. And increases the plants resistance to pests and diseases.

Chapter 5: FAQ - Common Issues and Solutions

- Dog Urine Patches
 - Once your lawn is fertilised, dog urine can create dead patches in your lawn. This can be combated with various products such as Dog Rocks
- What does NPK mean?
 - Nitrogen : Phosphorus : Potassium
- How often should I mow?
 - It is recommended to mow 1-2 a week for an ultra low, tight lawn, but maximum once a fortnight
- Where can I find help?
 - You can join many facebook groups full of avid lawnies
 - You can also contact Josh from *Soil and Stone Gardening and Contracting* via mobile on 0418 800 428.



Chapter 6: Seasonal Lawn Care Calendar

Timely and intensional applications of products is the key ingredient into having the best lawn on the street. Regular fertilisation, and preventative product application is the only way. Follow this month by month calendar to achieve the best lawn on the street.

January	February	March
. 'Spring and Summer Bloom' Fertiliser application . 'HydroGranule' Wetting agent application	. Acelepryn application	. 'Spring and Summer Bloom' Fertiliser application
April	May	June
. Apply pre-emergent Herbicide . Apply 'winter ready' fertiliser to boost colour.	. Post emergent weed killer (Bow n Arrow)	. 'SoilFix' Gypsum application
July	August	September
. Bow n arrow if required . 'Winter Ready' Fertiliser application	. Acelepryn Application . 'SoilFix' Gypsum application	. Bow n arrow if required
October	November	December
. Apply pre-emergent herbicide . Commence lawn renovation . 'Post-Reno-Revival' Fertiliser application . 'HydroGranule' Wetting Agent	. 'Spring and Summer Bloom' Fertiliser Application	. 'HydroGranule' Wetting agent application . Possible mid season scarify/ height of cut reset if its getting a bit spongy

Chapter 7: Enhancing Lawn Aesthetics, Mowers, Tools and Attention to Detail

Mowing and edging - One of the biggest areas of passion.

The basic mower is a rotary mower, this features a vertical shaft, and a blade which spins in a rotary motion. This uses a fast, sharp blade to cut the grass. This offers a reasonable cut, but has its limitations when approaching cutting heights below 25mm on kikuyu, or 10mm on couch.



The next step up from there is a reel mower, the cut is significantly cleaner, as it uses a scissor cutting motion, with one blade mounted on the frame, and the other is a series of 6-12 blades mounted radially on a reel. This cuts as clean as scissors, but with increased maintenance and hence cost, but if you're after the low mow - and Adelaide oval stripes - this is your answer.

For edging, you have multiple options - first is the basic whipper, snipper the cheapest, easiest option. Next is the blade edger, for crisp, straight edges. The third is the rotary scissors, this is used with the blade edger, and cuts the lawn instead of whipping it off, offering a clean, tear free finish, where the low mow precision is required. Do some research to see what works best for you.

Overseeding: if your lawn is partially shaded by a tree or colourbond fences, you can overseed with a shade resistant lawn variety such as a ryegrass. This helps retain coverage, colour and appearance. More about this in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: Propagation, Revival of Bare Patches

Lawn transplanting:

If your lawn has significant bare patches, they can be filled using runners. Wait for the lawn to spread, and run 20-30cm. Use a shovel to cut it, and dig it up. It can be transplanted to the bare patch, buried shallowly. Water, fertilise and it will continue to fill out like the rest of the lawn.

Instead of the runners you can also transplant the cores removed from the renovation process.

Overseeding:

To overseed a lawn, use a rake to break up the surface of the lawn, seed can be spread and covered with a light layer of sand. Apply a light dose of fertiliser and water 2-3 times a day for a short duration. The aim is to keep the soil damp until germination. Wait 2-4 weeks prior to mowing.

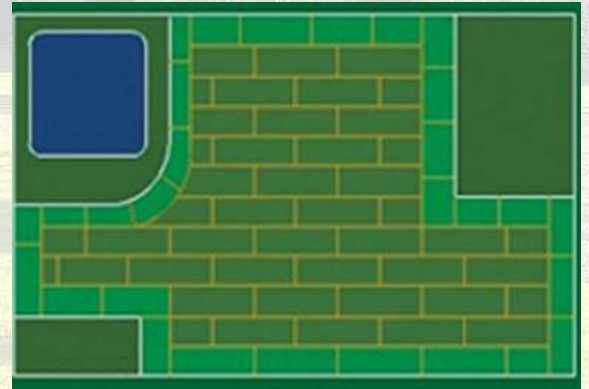
Chapter 9: Installing Roll Out Turf

When it comes to instant gratification, nothing beats roll-out turf. But to get the best result, it does take some effort and attention to detail.

Like anything, it all starts with the subsurface, if you have a heavy clay surface, you will need to break it up first. This can be done with a rotary hoe, either hire one, or if it's a small patch you can use a mattock. The aim is to loosen the top 100mm of soil allowing for root penetration. Add gypsum liberally to assist in future growth. Ensure the soil is turned over, clumps are broken down. If there is excess soil, remove it now, and re-till the area. Add 50-100mm of a sandy loam blend. (more details on this next.) I use an organic loam, which has gypsum and manure blended in also. I do not recommend more than 100mm, as this is exceeding the depth of the root zone, and any nutrient will then bind stronger in the soil below the lawn. Plus, it just takes more effort for no gain.

The loam can be spread first with a concrete rake and then perfected with a levelling rake. At this point it is time to roll it. Or if it's a small area, you can stomp on it. Use the levelling rake to flush it all off. Spread a half-dose of fast release fertiliser over the top, and the slabs of turf can go straight over that!

When laying your rolls/slabs of turf, start in a 90 degree corner, work around the outside as a perimeter loop, followed by rows internally. Do your best to make the join of two slabs meet the centre of the adjacent slab. This will minimise die-back and leave the cleanest job. The best pattern to achieve this for the centre is a brick pattern. Cut one slab in half and start with that. Remember, the slabs don't have to be cut perfectly - just make sure they are pushed hard up against the next one. Use a sharp large stanley/ box knife to cut the turf, and change blades regularly.



Order more turf than you need. If it's a square/ rectangle, you can often get away with 5%, but if you have curves/ circles you will be wanting 15-20%. Measure your area accurately, it will ensure this process goes smoothly.

Once your turf is laid, you can spread the other half-dose of fertiliser over the top, and water it in.

Water the lawn a couple times a day, keeping it damp, as all the roots are in that very thin slab. After a couple days, you should see tiny white finger roots poking out the bottom and into the soil, this means it's working!

After the lawn hits 50-100mm tall, or the slabs have rooted in the soil, you can give it the first mow. Reduce the watering frequency to once a day of 15-20 minutes (depending on water flow) after 2 months you can take it back to every second day. Keep it fertilised and enjoy. After 3 months you can run a scarifier over your lawn to remove any dead material, and top dress it with 10-15mm of 80/20 loam to level off the turf after the soil settles.

Conclusion

Restoring a Kikuyu lawn in South Australia requires a combination of regular maintenance and timely attention. By following the steps outlined in this guide, you can enjoy a vibrant, resilient lawn year-round.

If you want to stay up to date with the best lawn and garden tips, tricks and beautiful lawns, follow Soil and Stone on instagram and facebook or check out our website.

To find any of the fertilisers mentioned in this ebook, visit <https://www.houghturfgardensupplies.com/> and use the code **SoilandStone10** for 10% off store wide. There you can find the various fertilisers, wetting agents and gypsum products - and they're a new business with generations of experience, owned and run out of Hahndorf SA.

Thankyou for taking the time to read this, I hope you learnt lots and can implement these practices into your yard.

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