

Fall Prep Checklist

September–November tasks that set up stronger winter dormancy and cleaner spring green-up.

BEST USE: Print this page and keep it with your lawn equipment. Check each item as fall progresses.

☐ **Start with a soil test.**

Do not lime or fertilize by habit. Use the soil test to guide pH and nutrient decisions.

Winter is a good time to submit a sample if you have not tested recently.

☐ **Keep late-season nitrogen conservative.**

If nitrogen is needed, do not exceed 1/2 lb of nitrogen per 1,000 sq ft in September or within four weeks of the expected first frost. Stop as frost approaches.

☐ **Add potassium only when appropriate.**

When needed, apply about 1 lb of potash per 1,000 sq ft four to six weeks before the expected frost.

That is roughly 1.5 lb of 0-0-60 product per 1,000 sq ft.

☐ **Raise the mowing height slightly.**

In Charlotte's Piedmont region, raise your normal Bermuda mowing height by about 1/2 inch in mid-to-late September.

Protect the crowns without letting the lawn grow excessively tall.

☐ **Delay heavy thatch removal.**

If thatch is thicker than 1/2 inch, save power raking or aggressive removal until after full green-up in spring.

Late May is usually a safer recovery window than fall dormancy prep.

☐ **Keep leaves and debris off the turf.**

Mulch light leaf cover into small pieces. Bag or remove heavy, wet piles before they mat down and smother the Bermuda.

WINTER DO

- Clear wet leaves and storm debris
- Water lightly only during serious dry spells
- Watch for bright-green winter weeds
- Use only herbicides labeled for Bermuda + timing

WINTER DON'T

- Scalp dormant Bermuda
- Apply nitrogen to “wake it up”
- Walk on frost-covered turf
- Guess at lime or fertilizer rates

Winter Weed ID + Timing Card

Use the quick visual cues below to spot common winter weeds in dormant Bermuda.

SPRING PRE-EMERGENT QUICK CHECK

Start checking 2-inch soil temperature in early February. Prepare near 50°F; aim to finish before the average remains near 55°F.

Important: this 50–55°F window is mainly for crabgrass and other summer annual weeds — not fall-germinating winter annuals.



Poa annua

QUICK ID

Light-green clumps with fine blades and small pale/white seed heads.

TYPICAL TIMING

Late summer through fall germination

WHAT TO REMEMBER

Spring pre-emergent will not erase plants already growing.



Common chickweed

QUICK ID

Low, spreading mat with soft stems and tiny white star-like flowers.

TYPICAL TIMING

Cool, damp fall and winter conditions

WHAT TO REMEMBER

Prevent before germination; hand-pull small patches early.



Henbit

QUICK ID

Square stems, rounded leaves, and purple flowers that stand out in dormant turf.

TYPICAL TIMING

Establishes in cooler fall conditions

WHAT TO REMEMBER

Thin turf and lawn edges are common trouble spots.



Hairy bittercress

QUICK ID

Small white flowers with narrow seed pods that can burst and scatter seed.

TYPICAL TIMING

Cool season; often obvious by late winter

WHAT TO REMEMBER

Remove before seed pods mature when practical.

PRE-EMERGENT RULE TO REMEMBER

Pre-emergent prevents susceptible weed seedlings from establishing. It does not kill weeds that are already growing. Timing, even coverage, watering-in, and the exact product label matter more than brand name.