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Lawn Care

Mowing, fertilization, aeration, overseeding, weed control, and lawn renovation in New Brunswick

19 Expert Answers from Landscape IQ

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Best grass for a steep slope in Saint John NB?

For steep slopes in Saint John, fine fescue is your best choice, with perennial ryegrass as a close second.

These grasses establish strong root systems that prevent erosion while tolerating the challenging conditions of sloped terrain.

Fine fescue is particularly well-suited for Saint John's Zone 5a climate and steep slope conditions. It develops deep, fibrous roots that bind soil effectively, preventing washout during heavy Maritime rains. This grass tolerates drought once established (important since slopes dry out faster), handles partial shade if your slope faces north or east, and requires minimal maintenance once mature. Fine fescue also stays green longer into fall and greens up earlier in spring compared to other cool-season grasses.

Perennial ryegrass offers the advantage of rapid germination and establishment, which is crucial for erosion control on slopes. It germinates in 7-10 days versus 14-21 days for other grasses, quickly stabilizing the soil. However, it requires more water and fertility than fine fescue, so consider your maintenance commitment.

For Saint John's coastal conditions, both grasses handle the higher humidity and occasional salt spray better than Kentucky bluegrass, which struggles on slopes anyway due to its shallow root system. The **ideal blend for your slope would be 70% fine fescue and 30% perennial ryegrass** — this gives you the erosion control of fescue with the quick establishment of ryegrass.

Timing is critical in Saint John. Seed your slope in late August to early September when soil temperatures are warm but fall rains help establishment. Spring seeding (late May) is possible but riskier due to potential summer drought stress on the slope. Apply seed at 4-5 pounds per 1,000 square feet — slightly heavier than flat areas to account for some seed washing away.

Slope preparation matters as much as grass selection. If the slope is steeper than 3:1 (rises 1 foot for every 3 feet horizontal), consider erosion control blankets or hydroseed application to hold seed and soil in place. For slopes between 2:1 and 3:1, you might need professional installation with tackifiers or temporary erosion barriers.

Consider alternatives for very steep slopes. If your slope is steeper than 2:1, groundcover plants like creeping juniper, pachysandra, or even naturalized wildflowers might be more practical and lower-maintenance than grass. These establish deeper root systems and require less ongoing care than turf on challenging terrain.

Need help finding a landscaper experienced with slope seeding? New Brunswick Landscaping can match you with professionals who understand Saint John's coastal conditions and have the equipment for challenging terrain installations.

What is the best grass seed blend for shady yards in Saint John New Brunswick?

The best grass seed blend for shady yards in Saint John is one dominated by Fine Fescue varieties, ideally 50-60% Fine Fescue (a mix of Creeping Red Fescue and Chewings Fescue), 25-30% Kentucky Bluegrass, and 10-15% Perennial Ryegrass. Fine Fescues are the workhorses of shade tolerance in Maritime climates, thriving in as little as 3-4 hours of filtered sunlight per day while handling Saint John's coastal Zone 5a-5b conditions beautifully.

Saint John presents unique challenges for shady lawns beyond just limited sunlight. The city's Maritime climate brings 1,100-1,200mm of annual rainfall and high humidity, which means shady areas stay damp longer and are more susceptible to fungal diseases like red thread and dollar spot. Choosing disease-resistant cultivars within your Fine Fescue blend is critical. Look for named varieties like 'Chewings' or 'Jamestown' Fescue rather than generic "shade mix" bags from big-box stores, which often contain annual ryegrass that dies after one season.

When selecting your seed, avoid any blend containing warm-season grasses like Bermuda or Zoysia. These species cannot survive New Brunswick winters and will die completely during the first hard freeze. Similarly, skip blends with more than 30% Perennial Ryegrass in deep shade — while Ryegrass germinates fast (5-7 days), it needs more sunlight than Fescue to persist long-term.

For the best results in Saint John's shady areas, seed in early September when soil temperatures are still warm enough for germination (above 10°C) but cooler air temperatures reduce stress on young seedlings. This timing also gives the grass 6-8 weeks to establish roots before the first frost, which typically arrives in late September to mid-October. Spring seeding is possible after the last frost around May 15, but young grass will face immediate summer heat stress.

Prepare the shady area by pruning lower tree branches to at least 6-8 feet to maximize available light. Rake away heavy leaf cover, topdress with 5-10mm of compost, and overseed at a rate of 6-8 pounds per 1,000 square feet — about 50% heavier than sunny areas since germination rates are lower in shade. Keep the seedbed consistently moist for 2-3 weeks.

If your yard gets fewer than 2 hours of direct sunlight, even the best shade grass will struggle. In those areas, consider shade-tolerant ground covers like native Wild Ginger or Bunchberry, which are well-adapted to New Brunswick's acidic soils (typically pH 4.5-6.0) and require far less maintenance than a struggling lawn.

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Q3

When should I apply the first spring fertilizer to my lawn in Fredericton NB?

Wait until late May or early June to apply your first spring fertilizer in Fredericton — not as early as many homeowners think. The common mistake is fertilizing as soon as the snow melts in April, but at that point the soil temperature is still well below 10°C and grass roots aren't actively absorbing nutrients. Fertilizing too early wastes product and can contribute to nutrient runoff into the Saint John River watershed.

The key trigger for your first application is soil temperature. In Fredericton (Zone 4b), soil temperatures typically reach 10°C in mid to late May, about the same time the last frost date passes around May 20. At this point, your grass has already started greening up using energy stored in its roots from the previous fall. A light feeding now supports active blade and root growth rather than forcing premature top growth.

Your first spring application should be a balanced, slow-release fertilizer with an NPK ratio around 20-5-10 or similar. Apply at half the bag rate — roughly 0.5 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. This gentler approach avoids the flush of weak, disease-prone growth that comes from heavy spring nitrogen. Fredericton's river valley clay soils retain nutrients reasonably well, so you don't need to push as hard as you would on sandy coastal soils near Shediac or Miramichi.

Before fertilizing, consider testing your soil pH. New Brunswick soils are notoriously acidic, often registering pH 4.5-6.0, and fertilizer is far less effective in overly acidic conditions. If your pH is below 6.0, apply pelletized lime 2-3 weeks before fertilizing. Many Fredericton homeowners find they need 40-60 pounds of lime per 1,000 square feet to bring their pH into the ideal 6.2-6.8 range for cool-season grasses.

A solid fertilization program for Fredericton lawns includes 3-4 applications per season: the first in late May, a second in late June or early July, a light summer application in early August if needed, and the most important application — a fall winterizer — in late September or early October. The fall feeding is actually more critical than the spring one, as it builds root reserves that help your lawn survive New Brunswick's long winters with 250-300cm

of snowfall.

Professional fertilization programs in New Brunswick typically cost \$250 to \$500 for a full season of 4 applications, depending on lawn size. If you prefer DIY, budget roughly \$80-150 for quality slow-release fertilizer to cover an average Fredericton lot through the entire growing season.

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How often should I water newly laid sod during a Moncton NB summer?

Water newly laid sod in Moncton twice daily for the first 7-10 days, then gradually taper to once daily for weeks 2-3, and transition to deep watering every 2-3 days by week 4. The goal during the establishment period is keeping the sod and the top inch of soil beneath it consistently moist without creating standing water, which promotes root rot and fungal disease.

During the critical first week after installation, water each morning (around 6-7 AM) and again in the late afternoon (4-5 PM), applying approximately 10-15 minutes per zone with a sprinkler. You can check moisture by gently lifting a corner of the sod — the soil beneath should be dark and damp but not muddy. In Moncton's Zone 5a-5b climate, summer temperatures typically hover around 25-30°C in July and August, which means the sod surface dries faster than you might expect despite the Maritime humidity.

Moncton's climate actually helps sod establishment in some ways. The city receives roughly 1,100mm of annual precipitation, and summer humidity stays relatively high, reducing evaporation compared to inland areas. However, don't rely on rainfall alone during establishment — even a week without rain in July can kill newly laid sod that hasn't rooted. Keep watering on schedule regardless of humidity levels.

By the second week, roots should be starting to knit into the soil below. Test this by gently tugging on the sod — if it resists, roots are establishing. At this stage, reduce watering to once daily in the morning, applying about 20-25 minutes per zone to encourage deeper root growth. Morning watering is essential in Moncton because evening moisture combined with Maritime humidity creates ideal conditions for fungal diseases like brown patch and pythium blight.

From week 3 onward, begin transitioning to a mature lawn watering schedule: deep soaking every 2-3 days, delivering about 25-30mm (one inch) of water per week total. This encourages roots to grow deeper into Moncton's soil, which tends to be a mix of clay and sandy loam depending on your neighborhood. Deeper roots mean better drought tolerance and a lawn that survives without irrigation during mild dry spells.

Avoid mowing newly laid sod until it has been down for at least 2-3 weeks and roots have firmly established. When you do mow for the first time, set your mower height to 3-3.5 inches and never remove more than one-third of the blade length. Sod installation in Moncton typically costs \$2.00-3.50 per square foot installed, so protecting that investment with proper watering is well worth the effort. If you're unsure whether your sod is establishing properly, most local landscapers will do a quick check for free within the first month of installation.

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Q5

When is the best time to core aerate a clay soil lawn in New Brunswick?

The best time to core aerate your lawn in New Brunswick is late August through mid-September, when cool-season grasses are entering their peak growth period and can recover quickly from the process. This timing coincides with soil temperatures that still promote active root growth while avoiding the stress of summer heat.

Core aeration works by pulling small plugs of soil from your lawn, typically 2-3 inches deep, which relieves compaction and allows water, oxygen, and nutrients to reach grass roots. In New Brunswick, this is especially important because many properties — particularly in the Fredericton and Saint John River valley areas — have heavy clay soils that compact readily under foot traffic and mowing equipment. Sandy coastal soils near Shediac or Miramichi generally need aeration less frequently.

For NB homeowners, the ideal aeration schedule depends on your soil type. Clay-heavy lawns benefit from aeration once or twice per year, while sandy soils may only need it every 2-3 years. You'll know your lawn needs aeration if water pools on the surface after rain, grass seems thin despite fertilizing, or you can't easily push a screwdriver 3-4 inches into the soil.

The cost for professional core aeration in New Brunswick typically ranges from **\$100 to \$250** for an average residential lot (3,000-5,000 square feet). Many landscapers offer aeration and overseeding packages for \$200-\$400, which is excellent value since the two services complement each other perfectly. The aeration holes create ideal seed-to-soil contact for new grass seed.

A few tips for NB-specific aeration: water your lawn thoroughly the day before (the machine needs moist, not wet, soil to pull clean plugs), mark all sprinkler heads and shallow utilities, and leave the soil plugs on the lawn — they'll break down within 1-2 weeks and return nutrients to the soil. Avoid aerating in spring when NB soils are still saturated from snowmelt, as this can cause further compaction rather than relieve it.

If you're combining aeration with overseeding, use a grass seed blend suited to New Brunswick — typically 60% Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Fine Fescue, and 20% Perennial Ryegrass. Apply seed immediately after aeration, then keep the soil consistently moist for 2-3 weeks until germination. Fall aeration also pairs perfectly with a winterizer fertilizer application, setting your lawn up for strong spring green-up after New Brunswick's long winters.

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Q6

How do I fix bare patches in my lawn after a harsh New Brunswick winter?

To fix bare patches after a New Brunswick winter, wait until soil temperatures reach 10°C (usually late May), then rake out dead material, loosen the top inch of soil, apply seed and a thin layer of compost, and keep the area consistently moist for 2-3 weeks. Winter damage is extremely common across the province, caused by ice encasement, snow mould, salt damage near driveways, and vole tunnels hidden under snowpack.

Start by diagnosing what caused the bare patches, since this determines your repair strategy. **Snow mould** appears as circular matted patches with white or pinkish fungal threads — common in Fredericton and inland areas that see heavy snowfall (250-300cm annually). Gently rake these areas to break up the matted grass and improve air circulation; many will recover on their own once temperatures warm up. **Salt damage** along driveways and walkways creates brown, dead strips that won't recover — these need full reseeding. **Vole damage** shows as winding trails of dead grass at ground level, typically in areas where deep snow sat all winter.

For patches that need reseeding, the repair process is straightforward. Rake away all dead material down to bare soil. Use a garden fork or hand cultivator to loosen the top 1-2 inches of soil — this is critical for seed-to-soil contact. If your soil is the heavy clay typical of the Saint John River valley, mix in a handful of compost or peat moss per square foot to improve the seedbed. Apply grass seed at about 8-10 seeds per square inch (roughly 50%

heavier than normal seeding rates for quicker coverage).

Use a seed blend suited to New Brunswick's climate: 60% Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Fine Fescue, and 20% Perennial Ryegrass. The Ryegrass will germinate in 5-7 days and provide quick green cover while the slower Bluegrass (14-21 days to germinate) fills in for long-term density. Cover the seeded area with 3-5mm of finely screened compost or peat moss — just enough to hold moisture but not so thick it smothers emerging seedlings.

Keep repaired patches moist with light watering once or twice daily until grass is 2 inches tall, then transition to deeper, less frequent watering. Avoid walking on repaired areas for at least 4-6 weeks. Because New Brunswick soils are typically acidic (pH 4.5-6.0), consider broadcasting pelletized lime over your repair areas at 5-10 pounds per 100 square feet to create better growing conditions.

For large-scale winter damage covering more than 30-40% of your lawn, overseeding the entire property is more practical and cost-effective than patching individual spots. Professional overseeding in New Brunswick costs \$100-200 per 1,000 square feet and gives you a more uniform result.

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What height should I mow Kentucky Bluegrass during NB summer heat?

Mow Kentucky Bluegrass at 3 to 3.5 inches during New Brunswick summer heat, and raise the deck to 4 inches during extended hot, dry spells in July and August. Taller grass blades shade the soil surface, retain moisture, and support deeper root systems — all critical advantages during the warmest months of NB's short growing season.

The most common mowing mistake in New Brunswick is cutting too short. Many homeowners set their mower at 2 inches thinking it looks neater, but this "scalping" exposes the soil to direct sunlight, increases evaporation dramatically, and stresses the crown of the grass plant. During summer heat, short-cut Bluegrass quickly turns brown and goes dormant, while grass maintained at 3-3.5 inches stays green with significantly less supplemental watering.

Follow the one-third rule religiously: never remove more than one-third of the blade length in a single mowing. For a 3-inch mowing height, this means cutting when the grass reaches about 4.5 inches. During the peak growing season in June, this typically means mowing every 5-7 days. In the hotter, drier weeks of July and August, growth slows and you may only need to mow every 7-10 days. In Fredericton's Zone 4b climate, the growing season runs roughly 120-150 days, so your total mowing season typically spans late May through mid-October.

Leave the grass clippings on the lawn. This practice, called grasscycling, returns nitrogen and moisture to the soil and can reduce your fertilizer needs by 20-25% over the season. Clippings from properly timed mowing (following the one-third rule) decompose within days and do not contribute to thatch buildup despite the common myth.

Keep your mower blade sharp — this matters more than most homeowners realize. A dull blade tears grass rather than cutting it cleanly, leaving ragged edges that turn brown and create entry points for fungal diseases. New Brunswick's high Maritime humidity (which promotes diseases like red thread and dollar spot) makes clean cuts even more important. Sharpen your blade at least twice per season, or more frequently if you're mowing a larger property.

As fall approaches and temperatures cool in September, you can gradually lower your mowing height back to 2.5-3 inches. For the final mow of the season — usually late October in most of New Brunswick — cut to 2.5 inches to reduce the risk of snow mould, which thrives under long grass trapped beneath snowpack. Professional weekly mowing service in New Brunswick costs \$35-65 per visit, and most services will adjust cutting height seasonally if you ask.

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Q8

How can I get rid of crabgrass without chemicals in New Brunswick?

The most effective non-chemical strategy for eliminating crabgrass in New Brunswick is maintaining a thick, healthy lawn that simply outcompetes it — combined with proper mowing height, targeted hand-pulling, and corn gluten meal as a natural pre-emergent. Crabgrass is an annual weed that dies with the first fall frost and returns only from seed, so preventing new seeds from germinating is the key to long-term control.

Start by understanding crabgrass biology in New Brunswick's climate. Crabgrass seeds germinate when soil temperatures reach 13-15°C for several consecutive days, which typically occurs in late May to mid-June across most of the province. In warmer coastal areas like Moncton and Saint John (Zone 5a-5b), germination may start a week or two earlier than in Fredericton (Zone 4b) or northern regions. Each crabgrass plant can produce up to 150,000 seeds before dying in fall, so letting even a few plants go to seed perpetuates the problem for years.

Corn gluten meal is the primary organic pre-emergent option. Apply it at 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet in mid-May (about 2 weeks before expected crabgrass germination) to inhibit seed germination. It also provides a slow-release nitrogen boost equivalent to about 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. However, corn gluten meal is not a silver bullet — it's roughly 60-70% effective compared to synthetic pre-emergents, and it takes 2-3 consecutive years of application to build meaningful seed bank suppression. Important: do not use corn gluten meal if you plan to overseed, as it inhibits all seed germination including grass.

Mowing height is your strongest daily defense. Keep your lawn at 3-3.5 inches throughout summer. At this height, the grass canopy shades the soil surface and prevents light from reaching crabgrass seeds, which need light and warmth to germinate. Dropping to 2 inches essentially rolls out a welcome mat for crabgrass invasion.

For existing crabgrass plants, hand-pull them before they set seed — ideally in June or early July when plants are still small and haven't developed their sprawling habit. Pull after a rain when the soil is soft, and get the entire root. Fill the bare spot immediately with grass seed and a thin layer of compost to prevent other weeds from filling the gap.

The long-term organic approach focuses on building lawn density. Overseed thin areas in September with a quality NB-appropriate blend, core aerate annually to reduce compaction, maintain proper pH (6.2-6.8, which typically requires lime applications on NB's acidic soils), and fertilize adequately with 3-4 seasonal applications. A thick, vigorous lawn is the single best weed prevention strategy, and within 2-3 seasons of consistent organic care, most New Brunswick homeowners see dramatic crabgrass reduction.

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Q9

When is the best time to overseed a thin lawn in the Fredericton area?

The best time to overseed a thin lawn in the Fredericton area is between August 15 and September 15, with the first two weeks of September being the ideal sweet spot. During this window, soil temperatures are still warm enough (above 10°C) for reliable germination, daytime air temperatures are cooling from summer highs, and the young grass has 6-8 weeks to establish before Fredericton's first hard frost, which typically arrives in late September to mid-October.

Fredericton sits in Zone 4b with heavy clay soils along the Saint John River valley, which means overseeding timing is particularly important. **Spring overseeding (late May) is the common alternative, but it's significantly less successful** for several reasons: spring soils in Fredericton stay cold and saturated well into May from snowmelt, newly germinated grass faces immediate summer heat stress, and crabgrass and other weeds compete

aggressively with young seedlings. Fall-seeded grass avoids all of these problems and enters winter with an established root system, ready to explode with growth the following spring.

To overseed effectively, follow this process. First, mow your existing lawn to 2 inches — shorter than usual — to allow seed to reach the soil. Core aerate the entire lawn, making two passes in perpendicular directions for clay-heavy Fredericton soils. Aeration holes create perfect microsites for seed germination with excellent soil contact. Spread seed at 3-5 pounds per 1,000 square feet using a broadcast spreader, applying half in one direction and half perpendicular for even coverage.

Use a seed blend designed for New Brunswick conditions: 60% Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Fine Fescue, and 20% Perennial Ryegrass. The Ryegrass germinates within 5-7 days and fills gaps quickly, while the Bluegrass takes 14-21 days but provides the long-term density and self-spreading ability that creates a thick lawn over time. For shadier areas of your Fredericton property, increase the Fine Fescue proportion to 40-50%.

After seeding, apply a thin layer (3-5mm) of compost or quality topsoil over the seeded area. This protects the seed, retains moisture, and adds organic matter to Fredericton's clay soils. Water lightly twice daily — just enough to keep the top inch of soil moist — until grass reaches 2 inches tall, then transition to deeper watering every 2-3 days.

Consider combining overseeding with a starter fertilizer high in phosphorus (such as a 10-18-10 ratio) to promote root development. Also test your soil pH — Fredericton soils are commonly pH 4.5-6.0, and lime application 2-3 weeks before overseeding significantly improves germination rates. Professional overseeding in Fredericton costs \$100-200 per 1,000 square feet, or you can rent an aerator for about \$75-100/day and do it yourself.

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Why does my lawn develop brown patches every spring in New Brunswick?

Spring brown patches in New Brunswick lawns are most commonly caused by snow mould, a fungal disease that develops under prolonged snow cover during the province's long winters. With 250-300cm of average annual snowfall and snow sitting on lawns from December through March or April, conditions are perfect for two types of snow mould: grey snow mould (Typhula blight) and pink snow mould (Microdochium patch). Both thrive in the dark, moist environment beneath snowpack.

Grey snow mould appears as circular patches 6-24 inches in diameter with a greyish-white web of fungal mycelium visible as the snow recedes. Pink snow mould produces similar-sized patches but with a pinkish or salmon-colored tinge to the matted grass. The good news is that grey snow mould typically only kills the leaf blades, not the crown, so most affected areas recover on their own within 3-4 weeks of snowmelt as new growth emerges. Pink snow mould can be more destructive, sometimes killing the crown and requiring reseeding.

Other common causes of spring brown patches in New Brunswick include ice encasement and salt damage. Ice encasement occurs when mid-winter thaws followed by refreezing create a solid ice layer over the grass, suffocating it over weeks or months. This is particularly common in low-lying areas of Fredericton and Moncton yards where water collects during thaws. Salt damage from winter road salt and sidewalk de-icers creates brown, dead strips along driveways and walkways — a familiar sight across every NB city by April.

Vole damage is another frequent culprit that homeowners often mistake for disease. Voles create winding surface tunnels under snow cover, chewing grass down to the crown level. These appear as narrow, serpentine trails of dead grass once snow melts. Heavily affected lawns in rural and suburban Fredericton and Saint John areas may look devastated in April but often recover substantially by mid-June with proper care.

To help your lawn recover from spring brown patches, begin by gently raking affected areas once the soil is dry enough to walk on without leaving footprints. This removes matted dead grass, improves air circulation, and breaks up fungal mycelium. Do not rake aggressively on wet spring soil — you'll damage recovering crowns and compact the soil further. Wait until late May when soil temperatures reach 10°C, then assess which patches are recovering and which need reseeding.

To prevent brown patches next spring, mow your lawn to 2.5 inches for the final fall cut (long grass traps moisture under snow), avoid piling snow on lawn areas when shoveling, apply a fall fungicide in November if snow mould is a recurring problem, and improve drainage in low-lying areas. If brown patches persist year after year in the same spots, the underlying issue may be poor drainage or heavy clay compaction — problems worth addressing with core aeration and soil amendment.

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Q11

When should I apply pre-emergent herbicide to my NB lawn?

Apply pre-emergent herbicide to your New Brunswick lawn when soil temperatures reach 7-10°C at a 2-inch depth for 3-5 consecutive days, which typically occurs between May 1 and May 20 depending on your location in the province. The key is applying before crabgrass and other annual weeds germinate (at around 13-15°C soil temperature), giving the product time to form a barrier in the top layer of soil.

Timing varies across New Brunswick due to the province's range of hardiness zones. In warmer coastal areas like Moncton and Saint John (Zone 5a-5b), soil warms faster and you should target early to mid-May. In Fredericton (Zone 4b), mid-May is typical. In northern communities like Bathurst and Campbellton (Zone 3b-4a), you may not need to apply until late May or even early June. A soil thermometer costs under \$15 and removes all guesswork — check the temperature at 2-inch depth in a sunny area of your lawn for several mornings in a row.

The most common pre-emergent active ingredients available in Canada include corn gluten meal for organic programs and products containing dithiopyr or prodiamine for conventional programs. In Canada, herbicide regulations differ from the United States, and several provinces (including New Brunswick under the Pesticides Control Act) have restrictions on cosmetic pesticide use. Check current NB regulations or consult a licensed applicator to ensure the product you choose is permitted for residential lawn use in your municipality. Corn gluten meal is always permitted and provides a dual benefit as both a pre-emergent and a slow-release nitrogen fertilizer.

For corn gluten meal, apply at 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet and water it in lightly. For synthetic products (where permitted), follow label rates precisely — more is not better and can damage your lawn. Water the product in with 5-

10mm of irrigation within 24 hours of application to activate the chemical barrier. Once applied, avoid core aerating or heavy raking for at least 8-10 weeks, as disrupting the soil barrier breaks the pre-emergent zone and allows weeds to germinate through gaps.

One critical consideration: do not apply pre-emergent herbicide if you plan to overseed your lawn in spring.

Pre-emergents work by inhibiting all seed germination, including grass seed. If you need to seed bare patches, either skip the pre-emergent in those areas (spot-treat around them) or wait until fall for overseeding, which is the preferred timing in New Brunswick anyway. The fall overseeding window (August 15 to September 15) avoids any conflict with spring pre-emergent applications.

Most professional lawn care companies in New Brunswick include pre-emergent application as part of their seasonal fertilization program, which typically costs **\$250-500 for 4 applications** covering an average residential property. If you're DIY, a bag of quality pre-emergent for a typical NB lot runs \$40-80 at local garden centres.

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Q12

How do I establish a brand new lawn from seed in New Brunswick?

To establish a brand new lawn from seed in New Brunswick, prepare the soil thoroughly in August, seed in early September when conditions are ideal, and maintain consistent moisture for 3-4 weeks until the grass is established. September seeding takes advantage of warm soil temperatures, reduced weed competition, and the reliable fall rainfall that New Brunswick's Maritime climate provides.

Start with soil preparation, which is the single most important factor in new lawn success. Remove all existing vegetation, rocks, and debris from the area. If you're working with the heavy clay common in Fredericton's river valley or the sandy coastal soil near Shediac, amend the top 4-6 inches with 2-3 inches of quality compost

worked in with a rototiller or garden fork. This improves both drainage in clay soils and water retention in sandy soils. Grade the area to slope gently away from your house foundation (a minimum 2% grade) to prevent water pooling against the structure.

Test your soil pH before seeding — this step is critical in New Brunswick. The province's soils are notoriously acidic, often registering pH 4.5-6.0, while cool-season grasses perform best at pH 6.2-6.8. Most NB properties need 40-60 pounds of pelletized lime per 1,000 square feet worked into the soil during preparation. Apply lime at least 2-3 weeks before seeding to give it time to begin adjusting the pH.

For seed selection, use a blend suited to New Brunswick's Zone 4a-5b climate: **60% Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Fine Fescue, and 20% Perennial Ryegrass.** Avoid any mix containing warm-season grasses (Bermuda, Zoysia) that cannot survive NB winters. Apply seed with a broadcast spreader at 6-8 pounds per 1,000 square feet, making two passes in perpendicular directions for even coverage. Lightly rake the seed into the top quarter-inch of soil — seed needs good soil contact but should not be buried deeper than 5mm.

Apply a starter fertilizer with high phosphorus (such as 10-18-10) at the time of seeding to promote root development. Cover the seeded area with a thin layer (3-5mm) of peat moss or finely screened compost to retain moisture and protect seeds. On sloped areas, use erosion control blankets to prevent washout during heavy Maritime rainfall.

Water lightly twice daily — 5-10 minutes per zone — keeping the top inch of soil consistently moist but never puddled. Perennial Ryegrass will germinate first in 5-7 days, providing quick green coverage. Kentucky Bluegrass takes 14-21 days to appear and will continue thickening through the following spring. Do not mow until the grass reaches 3.5-4 inches, then cut to 3 inches. Stay off the new lawn as much as possible for the first 6-8 weeks to avoid compacting the developing root zone.

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Is it too late to plant grass seed in September in New Brunswick?

September is not too late — it is actually the best month to plant grass seed in New Brunswick, particularly the first two weeks of September. Soil temperatures are still above the 10°C threshold needed for reliable germination, daytime air temperatures are cooling from summer heat, and the province's Maritime climate delivers consistent moisture through fall rainfall. However, the window narrows quickly: seeding after September 20 carries increasing risk as the first frost approaches.

The ideal seeding window in New Brunswick depends on your location within the province. **In warmer Zone 5a-5b areas like Moncton and Saint John**, where the first frost typically arrives in mid to late October, you can seed with confidence through September 15 and with moderate risk through September 25. **In Fredericton (Zone 4b)**, the first frost often comes by late September or early October, making September 15 a practical cutoff. **In northern New Brunswick — Bathurst, Campbellton, and the highlands (Zone 3b-4a)** — soil cools faster and the first frost can arrive by late September, so seed should be in the ground by September 10 at the latest.

The reason September works so well is that grass seed needs 6-8 weeks of active growth before winter dormancy to develop roots strong enough to survive New Brunswick's harsh conditions. **Perennial Ryegrass germinates in 5-7 days and establishes quickly**, making it the workhorse of late-season seeding. Kentucky Bluegrass takes 14-21 days to germinate and is the greater risk with late seeding — if you're seeding after September 15, increase the Ryegrass proportion in your mix to 30-40% for insurance, since it germinates faster and provides ground cover before winter.

If you miss the September window entirely, dormant seeding in late October or November is an alternative strategy. This involves spreading seed after the ground has cooled below germination temperature but before it freezes solid. The seed sits dormant through winter, protected by snow cover, and germinates at the first opportunity in spring when soil warms. Dormant seeding success rates are lower (60-70% compared to 85-95% for September seeding) and you lose control over the timing, but it's preferable to spring seeding, which faces intense weed competition.

For the best results with September seeding in NB, follow these steps: prepare the soil and apply lime 2-3 weeks before seeding (NB soils are typically pH 4.5-6.0 and need correction), use a quality blend of 60% Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Fine Fescue, and 20% Perennial Ryegrass, apply at 6-8 pounds per 1,000 square feet, and keep the seedbed moist with light daily watering until germination. Apply a starter fertilizer at seeding and a light winterizer application in early October to help new grass build root reserves before the ground freezes.

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Q14

How do I deal with heavy thatch buildup on a New Brunswick lawn?

If your thatch layer exceeds half an inch thick, you need to address it through core aeration, power raking, or a combination of both — and the best time to do this in New Brunswick is late August through mid-September during the fall recovery window. Thatch is the layer of dead stems, roots, and organic matter that accumulates between the green grass blades and the soil surface. A thin layer (under half an inch) is actually beneficial, insulating roots and retaining moisture. But when it builds beyond that, it blocks water, air, and nutrients from reaching the soil and creates a breeding ground for fungal diseases.

Thatch buildup is particularly common in New Brunswick lawns for several reasons. The province's acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) slow down the microbial activity that naturally breaks down organic matter. Cool-season grasses like Kentucky Bluegrass produce vigorous above-ground runners (stolons and rhizomes) that contribute to thatch faster than they decompose. And NB's long winters mean the biological decomposition process is dormant for 5-6 months of the year, giving thatch a head start over the microbes that would normally keep it in check.

For moderate thatch (half to three-quarter inch), core aeration is often sufficient. A core aerator pulls plugs of soil through the thatch layer, introducing soil microorganisms directly into the thatch and opening channels for water and air. Make two passes in perpendicular directions across your lawn for heavy thatch, and leave the plugs on the surface to break down naturally. Professional core aeration in New Brunswick costs \$100-\$250 for an average residential property.

For heavy thatch (over three-quarters of an inch), power raking or dethatching is necessary. A power rake uses vertical blades to mechanically cut through and pull up the thatch layer. This is an aggressive process that tears up a lot of material and temporarily makes your lawn look rough, which is why fall timing is critical — the grass has 6-8 weeks to recover before winter dormancy. Power raking generates enormous volumes of debris; for a

3,000 square foot lawn, expect to remove 10-20 bags of material. Professional power raking costs \$150-\$350 in New Brunswick.

After dethatching, immediately overseed to fill in any thin areas using a NB-appropriate grass blend, apply a starter fertilizer, and keep the soil moist for 2-3 weeks. To prevent thatch from rebuilding, address the underlying causes: test and correct your soil pH with lime to promote microbial activity (target pH 6.2-6.8), avoid over-fertilizing with quick-release nitrogen (which forces rapid top growth that becomes thatch), topdress annually with a thin layer of compost to introduce beneficial decomposers, and maintain a regular aeration schedule — annually for clay soils, every 2-3 years for sandier properties near the coast.

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Q15

What is the best organic lawn care program for New Brunswick homeowners?

The best organic lawn care program for New Brunswick starts with correcting your acidic soil pH with lime, then follows a four-application fertilization schedule using compost-based or natural fertilizers, combined with proper mowing, overseeding, and aeration. This approach works with New Brunswick's Maritime climate rather than fighting it, and produces a thick, healthy lawn within 2-3 seasons without synthetic chemicals.

Step one — and the most impactful organic practice for NB lawns — is fixing your soil pH. New Brunswick soils are naturally acidic at pH 4.5-6.0, but cool-season grasses need pH 6.2-6.8 for optimal nutrient uptake. Without proper pH, even the best organic fertilizer is largely wasted because grass roots can't absorb nutrients efficiently in acidic conditions. Test your soil through the provincial soil testing service or a local garden centre, then apply pelletized lime as directed — most NB properties need 40-60 pounds per 1,000 square feet initially, followed by 20-30 pounds annually for maintenance. Apply lime in spring or fall.

The four-application organic fertilizer schedule for New Brunswick looks like this. Application one (late May): apply a slow-release organic fertilizer such as corn gluten meal at 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet — this serves double duty as both fertilizer and pre-emergent weed control. Application two (late June to early July): apply compost tea or a granular organic fertilizer with an NPK around 5-3-4 to sustain summer growth. Application three (early August): a light feeding of composted manure or kelp-based fertilizer. Application four (late September to early October): the most important application — a fall winterizer using organic sources to build root reserves for winter survival. Annual topdressing with 5-10mm of quality compost in spring or fall adds organic matter, beneficial microbes, and slow-release nutrients all at once.

Mowing practices are a pillar of organic lawn care. Mow at 3-3.5 inches (taller grass shades out weeds naturally), follow the one-third rule, and always leave clippings on the lawn. Grasscycling returns 25% or more of your lawn's annual nitrogen needs, reducing fertilizer requirements. Keep mower blades sharp for clean cuts that resist disease — particularly important in NB's humid Maritime climate where fungal diseases thrive on damaged grass tissue.

Overseeding in early September is essential to the organic program because a thick lawn is the single best defense against weeds. Core aerate in late August, overseed with a 60% Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Fine Fescue, 20% Perennial Ryegrass blend at 3-5 pounds per 1,000 square feet, and apply starter fertilizer. The full organic program costs roughly \$250-\$500 annually in materials for an average NB property if you DIY, or professional organic lawn care services charge \$400-\$800 for a full-season program including all four applications, aeration, and overseeding.

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Why is my lawn turning yellow after winter in Moncton NB?

Your Moncton lawn is most likely turning yellow due to snow mould, iron chlorosis from waterlogged soil, or nutrient depletion after the long winter — all extremely common conditions in Maritime New Brunswick that typically resolve within 3-6 weeks as the soil warms and dries. The key is correctly diagnosing which issue you're dealing with, since the treatment differs for each.

Snow mould is the most frequent cause of yellow and brown patches in Moncton lawns after winter. With 200-250cm of annual snowfall and snow sitting on the ground for 3-4 months, the damp, dark conditions under snowpack are ideal for grey snow mould (*Typhula* blight) and pink snow mould (*Microdochium* patch). Look for circular patches 6-24 inches in diameter with matted, straw-colored grass. You may see greyish or pinkish fungal threads on the matted areas, especially just as the snow recedes. The good news is that grey snow mould usually only kills leaf blades — the crowns survive and produce new growth once temperatures warm. Gently rake affected areas to improve air circulation and break up fungal mats. Most patches will green up on their own by late May.

Iron chlorosis — yellowing caused by iron deficiency — is another common springtime issue in Moncton.

This occurs when soils are saturated from snowmelt, which is typical in April and early May. Waterlogged, cold soil limits root function and iron uptake even when iron is present in the soil. Moncton's Zone 5a-5b location means the ground thaws earlier than inland areas, but spring rains and high water tables keep soils wet longer. Additionally, NB's acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) can actually lock up iron and other micronutrients. Once the soil dries and warms to 10°C, normal nutrient uptake resumes and the yellow color fades.

Nutrient depletion after winter is the third common cause. Your lawn uses stored energy reserves to survive 5-6 months of dormancy under snow, and by April those reserves are exhausted. If the lawn didn't receive an adequate fall fertilizer application (a winterizer in late September or October), it may emerge in spring with a generalized yellow-green color rather than the deep green you expect. This is different from the patchy yellowing of snow mould — nutrient depletion produces uniform light color across the entire lawn.

To help your Moncton lawn recover, resist the urge to fertilize immediately. Wait until late May when soil temperatures reach 10°C and grass is actively growing. Raking gently to remove matted debris and improve air circulation is the best early intervention. If yellowing persists beyond 4-6 weeks into the growing season, a soil test will reveal whether the issue is pH, iron deficiency, or another nutrient gap. Lime application to bring pH above 6.0, combined with a balanced slow-release fertilizer in late May, resolves most persistent yellowing within 2-3 weeks of application.

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Q17

How do I level a bumpy uneven lawn in New Brunswick?

To level a bumpy lawn in New Brunswick, use topdressing — the process of spreading thin layers of a sand-compost-topsoil mix over the lawn surface and working it into low spots — applied in late spring or early fall when grass is actively growing. For minor unevenness (bumps and dips under 2 inches), topdressing alone works well. For severe unevenness over 2-3 inches, you may need to strip the sod, regrade the soil underneath, and relay or reseed.

Bumpy lawns in New Brunswick are extremely common and develop from several province-specific causes. **Frost heaving** is the primary culprit — the 1.2-1.5 metre frost depth creates significant ground movement during winter freeze-thaw cycles, pushing soil and rocks upward unevenly. **Settling over buried tree roots, old construction debris, or poorly compacted fill** is another common cause, particularly in newer subdivisions around Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John where developers may have done minimal topsoil work. **Vole and mole tunnels** create soft depressions that collapse under foot traffic, and **heavy clay soils in the river valleys** expand and contract with moisture changes.

For topdressing, prepare a leveling mix of roughly 40% clean sand, 30% compost, and 30% topsoil. This blend fills low spots effectively while improving soil structure — the sand improves drainage in NB's clay soils, the compost adds organic matter and nutrients, and the topsoil provides body. Avoid using pure sand, which can create a layer that prevents water movement between the sand and your existing soil. Spread the mix 5-10mm thick (no more than half an inch) at a time using a shovel and landscape rake, then work it into the lawn with the back of the rake or a lawn leveling tool. Water thoroughly to settle the material.

Never bury existing grass blades more than half an inch deep in a single application. Smothering the grass with too-thick topdressing will kill it, creating a bigger problem than you started with. For deeper low spots, plan on

2-3 applications spaced 4-6 weeks apart, allowing the grass to grow through each layer before adding the next. The best timing for topdressing in New Brunswick is late May through June (after spring growth surge begins) or September (during fall recovery), when the grass grows vigorously enough to push through the added material.

For severe unevenness — dips deeper than 3 inches or pronounced ridges — a more aggressive approach is needed. Cut the sod over the affected area using a flat spade, roll it back, add or remove soil beneath to achieve the correct grade, compact lightly, replace the sod, and water heavily for 2 weeks. This is also a good opportunity to address underlying drainage issues. Professional lawn leveling in New Brunswick typically costs \$300-\$800 depending on the size and severity of the problem, and is well worth considering for properties with significant grading issues.

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Q18

When should I apply lime to my acidic lawn soil in New Brunswick?

Apply lime to your New Brunswick lawn in early fall (September to October) or early spring (April to May), with fall being the preferred timing because freeze-thaw cycles over winter help work the lime deeper into the soil. New Brunswick has some of the most acidic soils in Canada — commonly pH 4.5-6.0 — and regular liming is essential for healthy lawn growth since cool-season grasses perform best at pH 6.2-6.8.

Before applying lime, always get a soil test to determine exactly how much you need. Blindly applying lime without testing can raise pH too high, which creates its own set of nutrient availability problems. The New Brunswick Department of Agriculture offers soil testing services, or you can use a home test kit (less precise but adequate for basic guidance). Most NB lawns need 40-60 pounds of pelletized lime per 1,000 square feet for the initial correction, followed by 20-30 pounds annually for maintenance once the target pH is reached.

Use pelletized lime (also called granular or prilled lime) rather than powdered agricultural lime for residential lawns. Pelletized lime is easy to spread with a broadcast spreader, produces minimal dust, and is available at all New Brunswick garden centres and hardware stores. It dissolves gradually with rainfall and irrigation, which is ideal since NB receives 1,100-1,200mm of annual precipitation. Powdered lime works faster but creates dust clouds during application and is difficult to spread evenly.

The reason fall application is ideal comes down to chemistry and New Brunswick's climate. Lime reacts slowly with the soil — it takes 2-3 months to see meaningful pH change and up to 6-12 months for full effect. Applying in September gives the lime 6-7 months to work through the soil before the main growing season begins the following May. The repeated freeze-thaw cycles during NB's winters actually help by mechanically mixing the lime deeper into the soil profile than it would penetrate during the growing season alone.

Spring application (April-May) is the second-best option and makes sense if you're establishing a new lawn or missed the fall window. Apply as soon as the ground has thawed and dried enough to walk on without compacting wet clay. If you're also planning to fertilize and overseed, apply lime 2-3 weeks before fertilizing so it begins working before you introduce other amendments.

A few important application tips for New Brunswick homeowners. Never apply lime and fertilizer at the same time — lime can react with certain nitrogen sources and cause nutrient loss. Core aerate before liming for faster pH correction, as the aeration holes allow lime to penetrate deeper. On heavily acidic soils (pH below 5.0), don't try to correct all at once — split the application, applying half in fall and half in spring, to avoid shocking the lawn. For clay-heavy soils common in the Fredericton area, lime may need annual applications for 2-3 years before pH stabilizes in the target range.

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How do I transition from a weedy lawn to healthy thick grass in NB?

The most effective approach to transitioning a weedy New Brunswick lawn to thick, healthy grass is a phased renovation program over 2-3 seasons, focusing on building soil health, overseeding aggressively in September, and outcompeting weeds through proper cultural practices rather than relying solely on herbicides. Attempting to fix everything in one season rarely works because NB's acidic soils, short growing season, and heavy weed seed bank require sustained effort.

Phase one (first fall): soil correction and aggressive overseeding. Start in August by getting a soil test. Most New Brunswick lawns are too acidic (pH 4.5-6.0) for grass to thrive but perfect for weeds like dandelions, plantain, and clover, which tolerate acid soils better than turf grass. Apply 40-60 pounds of pelletized lime per 1,000 square feet to begin raising pH toward the 6.2-6.8 range. In late August, mow the lawn as short as possible (2 inches), core aerate aggressively with two perpendicular passes, and overseed heavily at 5-8 pounds per 1,000 square feet using a blend of 60% Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Fine Fescue, and 20% Perennial Ryegrass. Apply a starter fertilizer and topdress with 5mm of compost. Keep the soil moist for 3 weeks. The new grass will germinate and begin filling in gaps before winter.

Phase two (first full season): crowd out weeds with cultural practices. The following spring, apply corn gluten meal at 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet in mid-May as a natural pre-emergent and fertilizer. Mow consistently at 3-3.5 inches all season — this height shades the soil and prevents weed seeds from germinating. Follow the one-third rule and leave clippings on the lawn. Apply a balanced slow-release fertilizer 3-4 times from late May through early October. Hand-pull large weeds like dandelions before they seed, getting the entire taproot. By this point, the overseeded grass from fall should be well-established and competing strongly.

Phase three (second fall): repeat overseeding and assessment. Aerate and overseed again in September, targeting any remaining thin areas. By the second fall, most lawns are dramatically improved — the combination of corrected pH, thick grass coverage, and proper nutrition has shifted the competitive balance strongly in favor of turf grass over weeds.

Throughout this process, patience is critical. Resist the temptation to use aggressive herbicides that can thin your lawn further, creating even more space for weeds. Each weed pulled and each grass seed germinated shifts the balance. A thick lawn at the right pH is the best long-term weed suppression strategy. Professional renovation programs in New Brunswick run \$1,000-\$3,000 depending on property size and current condition, spread over 2-3 seasons of aeration, overseeding, fertilization, and soil amendment.

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