



## How Big is Your Lawn?

by Michelle Le Strange, UC Master Gardener

For some, taking care of the lawn is a relaxing pastime, but for many it is an undesirable chore. If your lawn is huge, then mowing it takes a long time and fertilizer can be expensive. If your lawn is small, then maybe getting the old lawnmower out of the tool shed is just too hard.

Regardless of all of the excuses, spring is right around the corner. It is time to face reality: The lawn season is about to begin. Maybe this year, the more you know, the easier it will be.

Rather than argue over how big or how small your lawn should be, today I want to discuss how you determine the size of your existing lawn. Ask people if they know the size of their lawn, and they rarely have a quick answer. Let's start at the beginning.

Why is it important to know the surface area?

- If you want to paint a fence, you need to know the surface area to determine how much paint to buy.
- If you want to lay carpet in a living room, you need to know the surface area of the room to know how much carpet you will need.

Why is it important to know the surface area of a lawn?

- If you want to plant grass seed or lay sod on a dirt lot, you need to know the surface area to determine how much seed or sod to purchase.
- If you want to topdress fertilizer, compost or humus on an established lawn, then you need to know the surface area to determine how much to buy and use.
- If you want to spray or spread an herbicide, fungicide or insecticide on an established lawn, then you need to know the surface area to determine how much to buy, but more important, how much to apply at one time.

I think you get the message.



Knowing the size of your lawn can save you money when applying fertilizer or other products to the space. / Getty Images

Mowed, manicured and irrigated lawns are not natural grasslands. They take energy and resources to keep them alive. In addition to the time commitment, homeowners frequently rely on many different kinds of lawn products. These products work well, if applied correctly. Apply too little, the product doesn't do the job and you have wasted your time and money. Apply too much and the product can damage your lawn, and more easily become a pollutant to surface waters (creeks, streams and canals) and groundwater.

### **How to calculate lawn area**

1. Supplies you will need: tape measure, pencil and paper, calculator or a brain
2. Remember geometry: Area = square feet (or square inches, yards or miles, etc.)
3. Equations for area: square and rectangle (length times width); triangle (base length times height of the triangle, divided by 2); circle (3.14 times the radius<sup>2</sup>). Remember that radius is one-half the diameter.
4. Go outside with your supplies. Make a rough sketch of your front, back and side lawns. Decide what shape best fits each distinct lawn. Measure the dimensions and calculate the areas for the different lawns. Write the results on paper.
5. Post the results in your garage next to your lawn tools for easy reference.

For unusual lawn shapes: Divide your lawn into segments of squares, rectangles, triangles and circles. Calculate their areas and add them together for a close approximation to the total area.

Now you know how much lawn area you have on your property. You can use the same process for flower and vegetable gardens. This will help you decide what size of a garden product to buy.

Often we purchase in bulk because it is a better buy, and so that we can make several applications (of fertilizer, pesticide, etc.). We still need to figure out how much to spread on our lawns, but knowing the lawn area is a huge help.

Here is one more tidbit of information from product labels: Rate = Amount to apply per 1,000 square feet. Let's assume the label rate is 2 pounds per 1,000 square feet. If your lawn is 5,000 square feet, then you should apply 10 pounds to your lawn (2 divided by 1,000, times 5,000). If your lawn area is 800 square feet, then you should apply 1.6 pounds to your lawn (2 divided by 1,000, times 800).

Reducing lawns to a manageable size, using lawn-care products carefully and conserving water will help you maintain an attractive lawn while promoting a safe environment. Good luck this lawn season.

To contact the Tulare/Kings Master Gardener Program, call 684-3325.

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