
Lawncare and Lawn Maintenance Guidelines

09/09/2020

1. Purpose and Scope

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to homeowners on routine lawn maintenance expectations within the neighborhood. The mission of the Watson Farms Homeowners Association is to try to raise property values while fostering a community spirit. As you know, our covenants state on page 15 "Each owner shall be responsible for maintaining and keeping his lot and improvements thereon in a good, clean and sanitary condition..." but what does this really mean? This document is intended to help you understand the expectations of the neighborhood.

Scope

This document applies to residents and homeowners of Watson Farms regarding routine lawncare and plot maintenance.

2. Definitions

Covenant	an agreement, usually formal, between two or more persons to do or not do something specified.
Ordinance	1. An authoritative rule or law; a decree or command. 2. A public injunction or regulation:

3. Responsibilities

HomeOwn	Homeowner
Res	Resident

4. Instructions

1. Caring for Your Lawn

1.1. Keeping your grass to an acceptable level

Maintaining your grass at a reasonable height is one of the major contributions to creating initial curb appeal. One of the biggest factors in the initial attractiveness of a house is the appearance of the yard. The first thing most folks looking for a new home see is the yard and then the house so it makes sense that it is wise to keep your yard looking well manicured. Some might say that they are not trying to sell their house so why does it matter all the time? To this I would say you are paying it forward because although you may not be selling your house today, maybe your neighbor next door is, or perhaps a neighbor up the street, and how the neighborhood looks impacts EVERYBODY! When everybody keeps their yard looking the best it can all the time, it just raises the appeal of the entire neighborhood.

The optimal height of grass can be dependent upon the type of grass that is predominant in the yard. Most yards in Central Indiana are some combination of

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Kentucky Bluegrass, Rye, and/or Fescue. Most grass seed manufacturers recommend you cut your yard at or near the highest setting available on your lawnmower which can be about 4" in height. It is also recommend you never cut more than 1/3 of the blades of grass when you cut meaning your grass should never exceed 6" in height.

Here is a quote from the Scotts website: "Longer grass blades can grow and support more roots and develop a deeper root system that is better able to find water and nutrients in the soil. Scalping the lawn forces grass plants to focus their energy on regrowing their blades, not deepening their roots, plus it makes it more likely that weeds can muscle in. Taller grass blades shade the soil and keep it cooler, helping prevent weed seeds from sprouting." Please never scalp your lawn just so you can wait a little longer to cut it the next time.

This can be reduced to a simple rule of thumb: If you notice a breeze is moving your grass blades, it is probably time to trim the lawn. And if your yard looks like the one pictured, please don't be surprised if you receive a violation letter. And if you get a violation for your yard, please just take some positive action about it like cutting your grass. You may have already corrected the issue by the time you receive the violation letter. We don't enjoy sending out violation letters and they cost all of our homeowners money from their association dues thereby reducing what we can do in other areas. Please help us help you!



If your yard looks like this when the inspection occurs, please don't be surprised when you get a violation letter.

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1.2. Edging your sidewalk and driveway

Imagine painting your living room but not worrying about painting the edges of the room. It is very similar in nature to not edging your yard as it is the "trim" of your yard and it provides another opportunity to show those looking at your property how much you care for your home. Besides, if you don't keep edging your lawn where it meets the sidewalk and driveway, the lawn will continue to creep over the top of the sidewalk not only detracting from the appearance but also narrowing the amount of walk way for you and your neighbors. It just provides a more finished look and it just looks to be cleaner. And as you will see further on in this document, keeping your sidewalk 'free from earth and dirt' is also a city ordinance, not just a finishing touch.

Here is an image of a sidewalk with the closer sidewalk being edged and the next yard not edged. The difference is clear to me and everybody that has seen this picture.



1.2.1. Sidewalk Seams

Don't forget to keep the grass out of the seams in the sidewalk. If you don't keep this under control, the grass or weeds will continue to grow during the season and creating a tripping hazard for those using the sidewalk and if not rectified by winter when there will be the freeze/thaw cycles, over a period of time it will start to break up your sidewalk. The same goes for the street and curbs in front of your home. If you want to reduce the opportunity for potholes in front of your house, kill the vegetation in the cracks like in the example.

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1.2.2. Lawrence City Ordinance Regarding Sidewalks

This is a local law, not a covenant.

§ 5-2-1-37. REMOVAL OF DIRT AND ICE FROM SIDEWALK.

All owners of real property abutting upon any street upon which there are located improved sidewalks are hereby required to keep the sidewalks in front of their respective properties clean and free from earth, dirt, rubbish, ice and snow or other obstructions which may accumulate thereon.

Penalty, see § 1-1-2-3

1.3. Treating your yard for weeds

You have a couple of options when treating your lawn for weeds. You can call a professional or try to handle it yourself. Your lawncare budget may impact your approach.

It is likely that your neighbors will greatly appreciate any and all efforts you put in toward reducing or eliminating weeds in your lawn because it will help them as well. If you can't afford to treat your yard for one reason or another, but would genuinely like to do so, you should consider talking to your neighbors about it as they may be willing to help.

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You will never know until you ask.

There are many ways you can treat your yard for weeds *and still be environmentally friendly*. The Internet is loaded with ads, articles, and YouTube videos describing a multitude of ways to accomplish the goal of a weed-free yard. The key is YOU still have to put forth the effort to make it a reality.



1.3.1. An example of a desirable yard



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1.3.2. An example of a less-than desirable lawn



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1.4. Planting bed maintenance

For flower beds and shrubs, it isn't as much as what we are looking to see as it is what we don't want to see: Weeds! The idea behind putting in the effort to plant shrubs and flowers is supposed to increase the curb appeal of your property, not make it less desirable so while spoil it by having a bunch of weeds trying to crowd out your flowers and shrubs? It just takes a little routine maintenance to have clean looking, weed-free beds. We understand that you are not going to go out daily and pull weeds out of the bed, but is weekly, like when you cut your grass, too much to ask? Nobody is forcing you to have them in the first place. All we are asking is that you take care of what you started or remove it and plant grass seed again. Your neighbors are counting on you to do your part.

Here are a couple of images of some beautiful, well maintained planting beds.



2. Caring for Your Trees

2.1. Keeping Sidewalks Clear

Lawrence has ordinances requiring home owners to keep their tree limbs trimmed over streets AND sidewalks. The bottom of the limbs must be no closer than 10' above the street or sidewalk. If you take a walk in our neighborhood, you won't have to walk too far to see folks who are not complying with this notice. This is not a HOA covenant, rather it is an ordinance, or LAW of the City of Lawrence.

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IN > Lawrence > Lawrence, IN Code ... > § 5-2-1-34. ENGAGING IN GAMES OR SPORTS UPON STREETS.

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(C) If the owner fails to cut down and remove any dead **tree** or part thereof within 15 days after receiving notice from the City to do so, then the City may cause the same to be done, and the cost thereof may be recovered pursuant to law by the City from the owner or occupant.

Penalty, see § 1-1-2-3

§ 5-2-1-33. TREE TRIMMING REQUIREMENTS ALONG RIGHT-OF-WAY.

(A) All owners of parcels of land situated within the City are hereby required to cause the **limbs** or branches of all **trees** on their property located along a street or **sidewalk** to be trimmed and removed so that the lowest **limbs** or branches on the **trees** shall not be nearer than ten feet to the surface of the street or **sidewalk**.

(B) In the event that the owner fails to trim the **trees** within 15 days after receiving notice from the City to do so, the Street Commissioner is hereby authorized to trim all **trees** which overhang City streets or **sidewalks**, the cost of which may be recovered pursuant to law by the City from the property owner.

Penalty, see § 1-1-2-3

3. Enforcement

You are correct, your Homeowners' board has no authority to fine you for covenant violations, but there are legal steps that can be taken to enforce our covenants. Also, the city is authorized to fine you for not following ordinances and the amounts may start off kind of small(\$50-\$75), but they can escalate quickly and grow to \$2500 per violation. An image of the ordinance is below.

§ 1-1-2-3. GENERAL PENALTY.

(A) Whenever in this code or in any ordinance of this City or in any rule or regulation promulgated by an officer or agency of this City, under authority vested by law, any act is prohibited or declared to be unlawful, or whenever the doing of any act is required or the failure to do any act is declared to be unlawful, and where no specific penalty is provided thereof, the violation of the provision shall be punished by a fine of not less than \$50 nor more than \$75 for the first offense or for each offense in the first continuous series of offenses and by a fine of not more than \$2,500 for any second or subsequent offense or for each offense in any second or subsequent continuous series of offenses.

(B) Each violation shall constitute a separate offense and each day that a violation continues, after notice of the violation is given to the responsible party, shall constitute a separate offense.

(C) The fine assessed for the violation of any ordinance shall be determined by a court of law in compliance with the provisions of the applicable code section prescribing the penalty or, if none is prescribed, then in compliance with division (A) above, depending on the nature and severity of the offense charged; provided, however, that if the violator, after receiving a complaint and summons for the ordinance violation, thereafter voluntarily complies with the provisions of the violated ordinance, admits the violation and pays the fine at the Ordinance Violation Bureau within ten days of receipt of the complaint and summons, the fine assessed shall be the minimum fine for each class of violation.

Cross-reference:

Ordinance Violation Bureau, see Title 1, Article 2, Chapter 7

5. Other Reference Documents

<https://www.scotts.com/en-us/library/spreaders-mowing-tools/how-mow-lawn-lawn-mowing-ti>

Watson Farms Plat Covenants and Restrictions

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6. Materials

Fertilizer

Grass seed

Mulch

Weed killer

7. Tools

Edger or edging attachment

Hand Shears For trimming shrubs and smaller tree limbs

Hedge Trimmer

Lawnmower

Loppers For trimming larger branches

Standard Garden Tools Shovel, rake, and other assorted common garden tools
