

Turf Management

Historic New England currently has four distinct models for turf management at the museum sites: formal lawn space; the rough-cut meadow/lawn; the interpreted hayfield; and the agricultural hay field. This document focuses on turf management at and around the museum properties and does not include land that is actively used for agricultural haying. Overall turf management decisions should be made based upon the interpretation of the site, economic viability of the practice and the use of the space in question.

Guidelines for Turf Management

Formal Lawn Space: Maintain a clean, formal look to the lawn space that represents a cared for lawn. Typically these spaces are found adjacent to the historic structures.

- Mowing may be required as often as once a week during the peak growing periods.
- Decisions to collect the clippings are based on visitor experience and interpretive requirements. Clippings left in place help replenish nutrients into the lawn.

Rough-cut Meadow/Lawn: Bridge the gap between manicured lawn and hay field to represent a rougher more historically appropriate lawn.

- Mow less frequently than formal lawn spaces. Mowing cycles may be every 2 to 3 weeks in peak growing periods and 3 to 6 weeks in slower periods.
- Decisions to collect the clippings can be based on visitor experience needs and economics.

Interpreted Hayfield: Simulate the look and texture of a hay field but the field itself is not in agricultural production.

- Some agricultural fields may be transitioned to Interpreted Hayfield if active use precludes the profitable growth of hay. An example would be a field used for parking periodically for large events at a site. This practice might cause the field to be cut before the hay is ready for harvest.
- Mow about one to two times per year and collect the clippings. Mowing at least one time per year will help keep invasives and weeds down.
- Edges may need to be maintained more often to manage brush and invasives along the walls, fences and other borders.
- Education is an important aspect of maintaining a “hay field.” Staff must fully understand the reasons behind so that they can communicate those reasons to visitors.
- Paths may be necessary to accommodate pedestrian usage. Mowing a perimeter path around the front lawn at the Lyman Estate would be an example that accommodates local dog walkers.