

Make Your Lawn The Best In The Neighborhood

Looking forward to warm summer evenings on the porch, staring out at a fresh green landscape?

A beautiful lawn doesn't just happen. It needs to be tended to once the signs of spring are in the air.

Here are steps you can take right now to help make your lawn the pride of the block this summer:

- In early spring, the condition of the lawn will depend upon the type of winter that has just passed, as well as how the lawn was treated in the fall.

Some common early-spring problems to watch for are dead patches, mole runs, grub damage and brown patches.

Raking the lawn lightly typically

rids the lawn of most winter problems, and will help you assess the extent of any major damage.

- Dead patches come from water accumulation and ultimately, poor drainage.

You will need to seed or sod these areas for the grass to grow. Spring is a good time to repair winter damage to your lawn.

- A more thorough raking to remove thatch, which shows up as a light-brown layer of decaying vegetation (mostly old leaf sheaths and clippings from previous years), can be done when the lawn is completely dry.

Dethatching, power raking, core cultivation and other cultivation activities should be done when the turf is actively growing.

- To promote early greening of the lawn, cut off dead leaf blades when the lawn is dry enough to mow.

Don't cut it too short. Mow only to about two inches high during the spring.

- Seed sown in early spring will grow successfully if it is well-watered and cared for.

Fertilize newly seeded grass with a high-phosphorous fertilizer, which fosters root growth.

- While many people are anxious to start their fertilizing program early in the spring, resist applying fertilizer before the ground is thawed.

Applying fertilizer to your lawn in the spring when the roots are actively growing will help stimulate turf recovery from winter dormancy.

- Trimming grass that is creeping onto the sidewalk or driveway won't help the grass grow better, but will improve the look of the landscape.

Early spring is perfect for this task.

Then, the edging blade can more easily slice through dense turf because the soil is moist and grass roots are not as thick as other times of the year.

- Several undesirables are probably growing within your lawn.

A weed and feed-type fertilizer

can eliminate weeds in your grass. Or if the weeds are sparse, pull them out by hand.

- Be smart when watering. Your lawn only needs one inch of water per week, including rainwater.

Deep, infrequent waterings are much more effective than short, daily efforts. Generally, the roots of weeds grow only in the first two

to three inches of soil.

The deeper the water soaks into the lawn, the more it will benefit your grass, not the weeds.

Overwatering your lawn might be the biggest mistake homeowners can make when it comes to their grass. Make this your mantra: water uniformly once a week.

Five Common Lawn Care Questions Answered

Taking care of your lawn and garden can be a tough task. Chances are your landscaping is the first thing people notice when they look at your home, so you want it to be in tip-top shape.

Don't turn to just anyone to answer your lawn and garden questions. Turn to the pros for some great advice.

The experts at yardcare.com, an online resource for an array of yardcare needs, receive just about every kind of question relating to proper lawn and garden care.

Here are answers to the five most commonly asked lawn and garden questions.

Q: What can I do about lawn damage caused by my dog?

A: Unfortunately, there is no quick fix when it comes to brown spots caused by dog urine.

But you can prevent this damage in the future with heavy watering and a little baking soda.

Heavy watering will help dilute the concentration of nitrogen in your yard, and adding baking soda to a watering can full of water will help neutralize the area.

Q: What should I do if my lawn is overrun with crabgrass?

A: Crabgrass grows vigorously in hot weather. A dense lawn is better equipped to resist an invasion of crabgrass so be sure to water and fertilize your lawn properly.

Another way to discourage crabgrass growth is by mowing higher.

Higher grass creates shade and prevents the germination of crabgrass seeds.

You can also try herbicides to control the crabgrass in your yard.

Pre-emergent herbicides should be applied before daytime temperatures are consistently above 65 degrees.

You can apply post-emergent herbicides on actively growing crabgrass when temperatures are above 70 degrees. Don't apply post-emergent herbicides if temperatures are expected to be above 90 degrees or if rainfall is expected within 24 hours.

Q: How often should I fertilize my lawn?

A: Most lawns need to be fertilized two to three times a year.

Fertilizing should begin with your first mowing and finish when the grass is done growing for the year.

Q: What are the benefits of a mulching mower?

A: Mulching mowers return grass clippings to your lawn.

Benefits include: a healthier lawn (clippings serve as fertilizer and help retain and conserve needed moisture), time savings (you do not have to stop to empty the mower bag or fertilize as often), and cost savings (you save on clippings disposal and fertilizer costs). If you mow regularly, a mulching mower will be beneficial to your lawn.

Q: When and how often should I water my lawn?

A: Most lawns require about 1 inch of water a week. The best time to water is early in the day.

Watering at night puts your lawn at risk for developing mildew and fungus disease.

Yardcare.com is a combined effort of The Toro Company and select gardening, lawn and landscape professionals throughout the country.

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