Caring For Your Landscape: Lawn Care

A greener lawn just seems to make you feel better. It makes your home and gardens more beautiful. But how do you keep it green? Just as you and I need our three square meals a day, utilizing all the food groups (of course), a lawn has similar nutritional needs.

Your lawn's needs are simple...it needs nitrogen for lush, green grass, phosphate for strong, deep root development and potash for growth and drought resistance. These elements are known as N-P-K for Nitrogen, Phosphate and Potash. To keep it straight, just remember N (for nitrogen) is for everything above ground (grass leaf)-P (for phosphate) is for everything below ground (roots) and K (for potash) helps the lawn interact with the soil. These elements are present in most balanced fertilizer products. The percentage of each element might differ, but these percentages are listed on every fertilizer product. They are the three numbers listed in the formulation; i.e., 25-5-5 would 25% of the bag weight would be available nitrogen, 5% phosphate and 5% potash.

Most folks like to see a quick green-up, but be careful, as too quick a top growth can occur at the expense of good root development. A good solution to this problem is WIN or W (ater) I (insoluble) N (itrogen). It allows the nitrogen to be released over a longer period of time. It is usually coated so that it is broken down over natural weathering process.

Follow these six steps for a healthy lawn:

Step 1: Dethatching. Thatch occurs in lawns as a build up of tillering that occurs with mature rhizomes. It is this internet or crossing of decomposing rhizomes that forms a mat in your turf just below the soil line. It should be removed with a dethatching machine or by mowing close to the ground and following with a stiff rake to tear up any remaining debris.

Step 2: Raking It's not only great exercise for you, but really stimulates your turf while removing the old grass, crabgrass and weeds. Because thatch and weeds decompose slowly and might contain weed seeds, we recommend against composting this material.

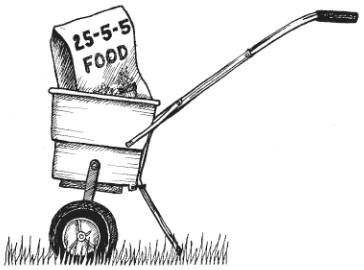
Step 3: Aeration. Punching holes, or coring your turf allows moisture, fertilizer and air to penetrate the soil. This can reduce the effects of soil compaction and allow for better drainage. This can be done mechanically by a lawn service or manually with a foot press aerator or a new pair of golf shoes that need breaking in.

Step 4: Seeding. For spot seeding many choose to use a blend of perennial ryegrasses. They germinate quickly, usually with 7-10 days, and provide quick cover for winter damaged areas such as entry ways, driveways and play areas. Choose a seed mixture that is right for your area. Blends are available in sunny, shady, or combination areas. Broadcast by hand or with a rotary spreader. Water in well, possibly daily until seedlings are well established.

Step 5: Fertilizing. For renovation your turf we recommend using a "starter" fertilizer. This provides a green-up, but also focuses on developing the root system, making your turf disease and drought resistant. Follow directions on bag for application instructions.

Step 6: Watering. A new lawn, whether it is sod or seed, should be watered consistantly until well established. This might mean daily waterings, more in warmer weather.

Lawn Care Tips



Seeding your lawn.

How much seed do you really need? In depends on your application. In full sun, figure about 4-5 lbs for 1000 (M) sq. ft for a new lawn and about 1.5 lbs/M for overseeding. In deep shade your numbers should be more like 3 lbs/M for a new lawn and 1.5 lbs/M for overseeding.

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