

Hi-tech tools simplify lawn care

REUVENATING a lawn after a long, hot summer used to be a chore. Today's new hi-tech tools simplify matters. Before doing anything drastic like totally replacing the turf, evaluate the extent of the damage.

If a lawn is basically healthy, small brown or bare spots usually take care of themselves. Unhealthy patches 10 inches or more across must be dug up and reseeded.

Instead of shovel and elbow grease, use a weeder-cultivator, new on the market, to remove discolored turf and cultivate the soil below. A new gasoline-powered model functions as an efficient turf cutter.

Twin reciprocating blades slice through grass for easy stripping. Before scattering new seed, use the weeder-cultivator to mix peat moss plus fertilizer into the earth. Tamp the seed into the enriched soil and water gently. Keep patches constantly moist until grass sprouts.

In one new model the weeder-cultivator instantly converts to a string-trimmer/brush-cutter/tree-pruner or to a power-blower for fast clean-up of grass clipping, leaves and other garden debris.

THE LIGHTWEIGHT string-trimmer employs whirling nylon cord to cut weeds and grass where lawnmowers can't reach.

Substitute circular metal blades to tackle heavy weeds, brush or tree limbs up to three inches in diameter.

With isolated blemishes repaired, three

simple steps can bring lackluster lawns to life:

- testing and adjusting soil pH.
- Applying extra fertilizer.
- Raising and/or sharpening the lawn-mower blade.

Local extension services offer inexpensive soil analyses. Results will indicate the amount of ground lime to spread over turf if soil is too acidic, or how much sulfur to add if it is too alkaline.

IF TESTS REVEAL soil nutrient deficiencies, fertilizer recommendations will be made. Lawn foods vary regionally, but a typical formulation might be 10-6-4 — high in nitrogen (10 percent) to promote thick green growth. A calibrated spreader is the quickest way to evenly distribute granular and ground materials.

Bermuda grass, bent grass and proprietary blue grasses can be clipped short; however, close mowing can stunt the root growth of other types of lawn grasses.

Consult the extension service for the proper blade height for your grass. Do not water the lawn excessively during late spring and early summer. Too much moisture gives weeds a competitive edge.

A DULL MOWER blade bruises as it cuts. Injured grass tissue turns brown and discolors the lawn, which becomes more prone to disease. Common rotary blades

can be sharpened with a file or sharpening stone.

If problems persist, the cause may be a thick layer of thatch or compacted soil. Both conditions are curable with machines offered for rent at garden centers.

Thatch is a build-up of dead and unde-

composed grass near the soil surface. A small amount of thatch is beneficial, but heavy deposits block water, air and fertilizer.

Finish the job with a top dressing of high-nitrogen fertilizer immediately followed by a watering.



In a healthy lawn, small brown or bare spots generally heal over. Patches 10 inches or more across must be dug up and reseeded. A weeder-cultivator, shown above, removes the discolored turf, digs out weeds, cultivates the soil and mixes in fertilizer — all in a matter of seconds. The soil is then ready for reseeding.

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