


glen oaks landscapes
24300 Meadowbrook at 10 Mile, Novi 477-7977

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Seedy situation

Lawns, old ones in particular, often have a big thatch problem. Thatch is the interwoven barricade of plant roots and crown grass next to the soil surface. If it becomes thick, it can cause problems with water runoff rather than soaking deeply into the soil around the plant.

Dethatching machines are available at most rental stores and devices for rotary mowers are also sold to remove the thatch from the lawn. Mechanical removal leaves the lawn looking like it has just gone through a super-hurricane season, but it is best to remove thatch to prevent further damage to the lawn.

John R. Hall, Turf Specialist, University of Maryland, believes pathogenic organisms causing leaf spot, stripe smut, dollar spot, brown patch, fusarium and pythium are harbored by the thatch layer. Hall also states, when thatch layers are kept moist, roots tend to develop in the thatch layer, and crown regions of the individual turfgrass plants tend to be elevated in the thatch.

The fine fescues are generally regarded as slower growing grass and consequently do not create thatch as rapidly as other types of

grasses. On the other hand, the fine fescues do not decompose as rapidly as some grasses, because of their fiber makeup.

Grasses tend to thatch more when over-fertilized since the growth process is speeded up. Researchers have shown light applications of lime may be beneficial in speeding up the decomposition of thatch. Light applications of nitrogen also helps to decompose thatch.

Of course, one of the best ways to reduce thatch buildup is to catch and remove grass clippings at mowing time. More frequent mowing also seems to be a thatch reducing practice.

If the homeowner wants to remove the thatch from his lawn, it is best to do it in the early spring or in the fall months when there is still growing weather. This is also a good time to overseed the lawn. New grass seed applied at this time can make contact with the soil and give your lawn a fresh start.

Dethatching should not be done in the hot summertime. The shock to the remaining grass plants caused by the process along with the hot weather could destroy much of the grass left on the lawn.

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