

# Ready the lawn for winter

Fall can be one of the more important times in your lawn's life. Following a few simple operations can help your lawn come through the rigors of winter in fine style and get a head start for Spring.

In September de-thatch your lawn using a lawn groom rake, a de-thatching attachment for your lawn mower or rent a power rake. Thatch is the build-up of undecomposed clippings, stems, roots, leaves, etc. just above the soil line. Some thatch is beneficial especially during the hot months as it helps keep the soil cool and moist.

Too much thatch acts as a barrier to the grass plants' nutrition and provides a haven for grass fungi and diseases. De-thatching in the Fall is

ideal as the grass is well established and the turf is then able to absorb winter moisture and fertilizer.

If your soil is rather compacted, this is an ideal time to aerate utilizing an aerator that removes a soil core. Healthy grass must have air. Both de-thatching and aerating help provide air and the removal of the soil cores creates tiny reservoirs which catch moisture.

The most important feeding of the year is in the Fall. If you only fertilize once a year, this is the time to do it. Fall feeding keeps grass growing and green longer into cold weather and gives a lawn a chance to store food that will give it a fast start in spring. A lawn may not show

too much top-growth in the Fall, but will expend a great deal of energy building up a strong root system and growing denser.

In the latter part of October, or the first part of November, feed with a winter green or survival lawn food that has low-nitrate, high phosphorus and potash. Gypsum can also be applied during these months which will help prevent salt damage, discourage winter disease and dog damage. If your lawn is due for liming, this is the time to do it using dolomitic lime.

Don't let your lawn go into winter with a long top. Keep on mowing as long as it grows. Make your final cut before winter at approximately 2".

# Winter insurance

Early Fall is the time to plant spring flowering bulbs, particularly crocus and narcissus. Tulips may be planted later on in the Fall.

About the middle of October is the time to dig up bulbs and perennials to be forced for early blooming. Store the potted plants in a cold frame and water moderately until foliage dies naturally. Then move indoors to a hothouse.

Mulching will do much to provide winter insurance for your gardens. It's insulating effect prevents wide

fluctuations in soil temperature and reduce the chance of frost heaving doing root damage. Mulches also assist the soil in retaining vital moisture.

Rosebushes require extra attention. Pile soil about 8" high around the bush, then completely surround with straw.

Young or recently planted trees should be insulated around root area with mulch after the ground is frozen. They should also be staked and guy-wired to prevent loosening

of the roots by high winds. Wrapping the trunks with burlap or other suitable material will prevent bark damage from alternate freezing and thawing damage.

Broadleaf or other evergreens in windy exposures can be protected from drying by windscreens constructed of burlap, corrugated cardboard, snow fence or other available material. Do not use polyethylene or other plastic sheeting.

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