

lawns

Seeding, weeding, raking and mowing: Gee, isn't grass just loads of fun?

Here are some of the kinds of questions asked about lawn care.

What causes irregular patches of matted, browned-out grass in the spring?

It is probably damage from a disease called snow mold fungus. Take a brush or a flexible rake and lightly break up the matted grass enough to allow air to circulate and sunlight to reach the crown of the grass plants. Then feed the grass with a slow-release fertilizer that will provide the nutrients needed for sustained feeding and vigorous growth. Much of the grass will probably recover by mid-spring or early summer. Damage can be avoided in the future by using a fertilizer in the fall which contains a lawn disease preventer.

I have to seed this spring. How can I prevent weeds?

You should fertilize at the same time you seed, so use a fertilizer that also contains a crabgrass preventer; it will keep the crabgrass from sprouting. Be sure to use the kind that won't harm your seed. Most broadleaf weeds cannot be prevented but must be controlled while they are growing. To control broadleaf weeds, wait until the new grass seedlings have been mowed at least four times. Then fertilize with a combination product that also controls actively growing dandelions and other broadleaf weeds.

How soon can I mow my lawn after I have seeded?

Plan on mowing a newly planted lawn as soon as the grass is about two inches high, cutting it back to about 1½ inches. If you have seeded in order to thicken a lawn, go ahead and mow whenever the grass needs it. The mower will not harm the seed you have planted.

When can I dethatch my lawn?

The recommended times for dethatching (removing some of the matted dead grass that collects in a lawn) are spring or early fall. This spring, wait until your grass has begun to grow and has been mowed a few times. There should be some moisture in the soil, but the lawn should not be soggy, which can cause a thatching machine to tear out too much of the desirable grass.

How long does it take seed to germinate?

There is no definite time because it depends on the type of seed, the warmth of the soil and the moisture in it. For seed to germinate, there must be both adequate

moisture and a soil temperature of 55 degrees or above. Without both factors together, the seed will not germinate well.

When is the best time to use a weed control?

Broadleaf weeds can be controlled whenever they are in active growth — from spring through fall (except when seeding).

My grass is quite shallow-rooted, and when I rake it in the early spring large pieces of it come loose from the soil. Why?

Very often, grass is shallow-rooted when it is growing in a shady area or when it must compete with tree roots for the available moisture and nutrients. Avoid severe raking. If possible, trim the trees to allow more sunlight to reach the grass. Follow a good fertilizing and watering program to help the grass compete with the trees for moisture and nutrients.

My grass is going to seed. Can I mow it? Will the seed help to thicken the lawn?

The grass is probably bluegrass. This condition occurs in the spring as part of the normal growing pattern of bluegrass. It is temporary and should last only a few weeks. The seed heads are of little or no value. A sharp and properly adjusted mower will cut these stems. Rake or sweep them up.

I have brown circular spots in my lawn this spring, most of which are only three to six inches in diameter. What are they?

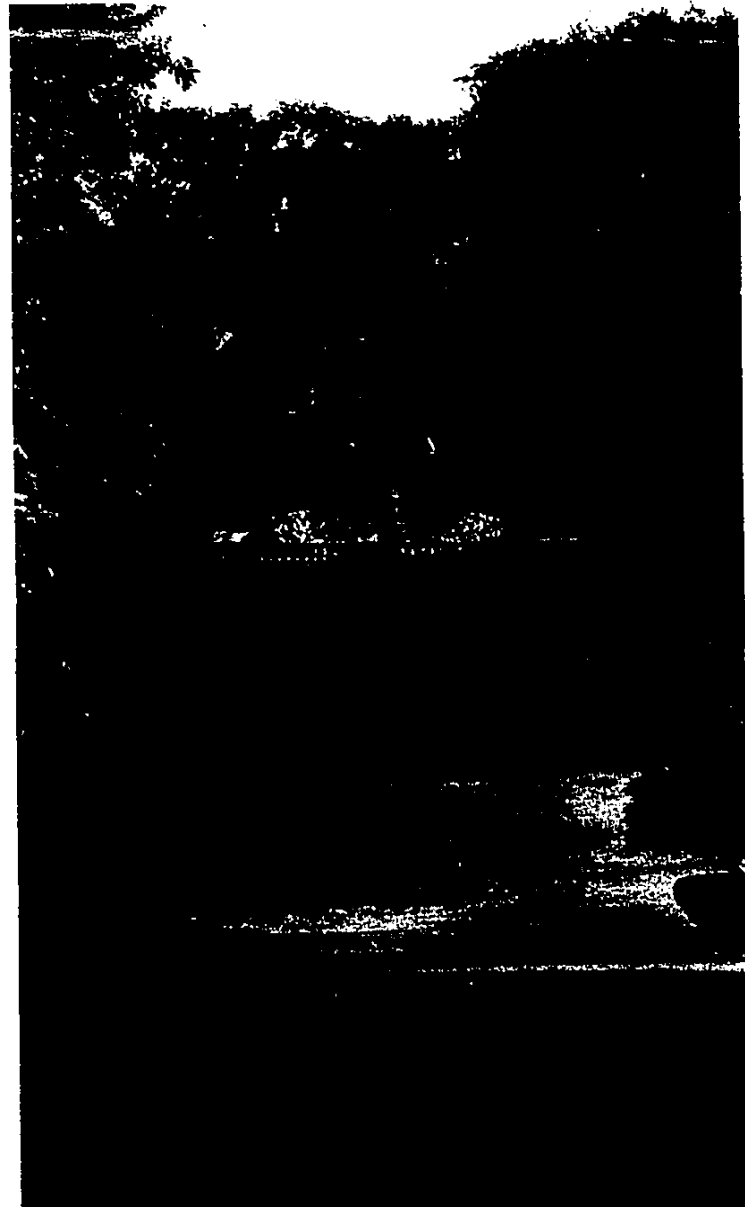
They are probably from the urine deposits of dogs. Flood the area with water to wash the deposits through the soil. Repair the scar with sod or seed.

I have isolated clumps of coarse grass growing in my lawn which have lived over the winter. What can I do about them?

These are perennial grasses which do not die over the winter. There is no product which will eliminate these clumps without destroying other grasses as well. They should be removed physically or spot treated with a nonselective weed control. The spot can then be reseeded or sodded.

Should I roll my lawn this spring?

Rolling generally is not recommended because it tends to compress the soil, making it difficult for moisture, air and nutrients to reach the roots. Normal rainfall and mowing will usually press clumps of grass that have been lifted by frost back into soil.



If you think your lawn is big, just think of the folks at places such as Cranbrook, who have more than their share of work.