



A weekly question/answer column

What Can I Do Now To Care For My Lawn?

Jerry Goodspeed answers:*

If you are trying to wrap up inside projects and the sight of lawnmowers and people outside doing yardwork makes you feel guilty, you are not alone. If you start soon, however, your yard won't look much different from the neighbors in a few weeks. Proper care of your lawn in the spring will help promote healthy, green grass throughout the year. Consider these tips.

- Core aeration, where small plugs are removed from the soil, has proven to be more beneficial to turf than power raking, which was a common yard care technique several years ago. Aerating allows for better air, water, and fertilizer penetration into the soil. It also helps reduce the thatch layer and minimize compaction that produces unhealthy roots. It can be done any time the ground is free from snow. Heavily used areas and clay soils may need to be aerated twice a year, once in the spring and again in the fall. Normal soil types and use areas are usually fine with one aeration in the spring, and sandy soils only need it every two years.
- If a fall fertilizer was applied last year, the grass may not need it again until mid or late May. If there was no fall application, a fertilizer high in nitrogen can be applied now. Consider using a slow release fertilizer, such as sulfur coated urea. These fertilizers are more expensive, but only need to be applied every two to three months to keep the lawn looking green and lush.
- You can begin mowing your grass as soon as the lawn starts to grow. Leave grass between 2 1/2 to 3 inches tall once you start mowing. You should begin watering when the lawn starts to look dry or begins to show early symptoms of water stress.

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