

Winterizing Your Lawn

Most times your grass can survive a cold winter. However, when truly extreme winter occurs, your grass may not be able to handle it. You may end up with some dead grass from severe weather conditions.

The grass plants in a home lawn are living organisms that need to be properly cared for all year round. Autumn is when the grass plant begins to prepare itself for winter, and next summer. Autumn maintenance practices are important in building up the plant's tolerance to damaging temperature fluctuations, and disease organisms.

Fertilisation

Autumn is the most crucial time to fertilise your lawn. It is during the last days of autumn that the grass plant slows its top growth and begins storing nutrients and sugars for the harsh months ahead. The storing process continues for as long as the plant is green. An autumn fertilisation is critical-this is the time when the plant is building reserves to maintain it's health and thus determines the quality of next summer's lawn. Nitrogen and Potassium are essential parts of this process. Once the summer's rations are used up, the grass plant is ready for another feeding in the autumn to increase root growth and fill them with food. These nutrients are also extremely beneficial in increasing the plant's resistance to damaging diseases, which will often attack when the plant is in a weakened state.

Aeration

The benefits of autumn aeration to the grass plant cannot be stressed enough. This service reduces soil compaction, excessive thatch, and provides a top dressing for the lawn. By breaking up compaction and removing excess thatch, the infiltration of fertiliser nutrients, sunlight and air down into the soil is greatly improved. With this improved movement of needed elements, root growth is stimulated and extensive growth of stunted root systems occurs. By greatly improving root growth, the grass plant can reach and store more nutrients and water necessary to improve its health and stress tolerance, which will directly benefit the lawn's quality next summer.

Mowing

Just as mowing below the recommended height in the heat of summer will damage your lawn, so too will mowing too short in the cold weather of autumn. When the cool weather of autumn arrives, raise your mowing height to one half inch above the recommended height for the summer months. This will help stimulate stunted roots. For the final mowing of the year, lower your mowing height to one half inch below the standard summer mowing height. This will help the foliage prepare for winter and avoid damage from disease. As well, the clippings from the final mowing should be left on the lawn as mulch but only if a mulching mower can be used. This will protect the delicate crowns of the grass plants, and provide valuable nutrients for the lawn.

Raking

It is important to remove all large piles of debris that cannot be mulched back into the lawn with your lawn mower. Lawn mower attachments are available that chop grass and leaves into tiny bits that provide a light top dressing which will supply nutrients to the soil as they breakdown. Large quantities of debris will not breakdown quickly, and so will damage the lawn by suffocating it, and by giving a moist home to damaging disease organisms. Please contact the office of you local Weed Man for more information.