

SPRING LAWN CARE

A simple guide to getting your lawn in order...

MOW REGULARLY The most important task is to mow the lawn correctly, commencing in March and finishing in October. The purpose of mowing a lawn is to build up a vigorous, fine quality sward following the general rule to mow often but not too closely. As a guide, cut twice a week to a 1½cm (½ inch) clearance when the grass is growing strongly during the summer, and once a week in spring and autumn (and during prolonged spells of dry weather) to 4-5cm (1½ -2inches) of clearance.

MOSS CONTROL Small patches of moss indicate that you may need to cut at a greater frequency to encourage vigour and to reduce open turf; they can also result from growing conditions such as drainage which may need improvement. The application of lawn sand at any time during the period from April through to June will turn the moss brown and make it easier to rake out.

RAKE/AERATE Rake the lawn once in spring and again in autumn to prevent the build-up of thatch and to remove dead vegetation including fallen leaves. Aerate the lawn by spiking with a fork (or even better, a hollow tine aerator) to relieve compacting and improve drainage. This can be done once a year if the ground is badly compacted. Once every three years should suffice if a hollow tine aerator is used (this looks like a large fork with hollow tubes instead of tines).

WEED CONTROL Kill the weeds as soon as they appear. Remember that no single product can do everything. **READ THE LABEL CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU BUY AND USE PESTICIDES CAREFULLY.** Lawn weed killers such as **Weedol Lawn Killer** (the new name for Verdone) destroy broad-leaved weeds but do not harm the grass; they must be applied during the growing season i.e. April to September. Do ensure that you use the right weed killer for a particular job. Manual methods can be used, but can be very time consuming.

FEEDING A routine spring and autumn feed is essential. Apply a high nitrogen fertilizer such as **Evergreen Complete** in early spring to give greener grass through the season.

TOP DRESSING This is the application of **Lawn and Turf Dressing**, a mixture of peat, loam and sand to the surface of the lawn every autumn and early spring. This improves the vigour of the grass and helps with drainage. It gradually fills in minor hollows and over a period of years builds up a perfect medium for grass growth.

For a more environmentally friendly lawn

Don't cut too short – aim for 2.5cm - 3cm but allow up to 5cm during drought conditions and for the first few cuts in spring. This reduces water loss in summer and helps to prevent the growth of moss.

Only use grass box if clippings are long – not for routine mowing. The clippings then nourish the lawn. Rake a couple of times during the summer to prevent a thick 'thatch' building up. Accept a sprinkling of daisies, buttercups, clover and other wildflowers as a pretty feature of your lawn. Enjoy the butterflies that they will attract into the garden. Dig out (with an old knife or a daisy grubber) the weeds such as thistle and dandelion that will produce large rosettes of leaves. Alternatively apply a pinch of lawn sand to the heart of the rosette.

Further advice can be found in The GREEN garden expert by Dr D. G. Hessayon