

TURF TIPS

The Turf Care Newsletter of Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd.®
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This is your second turf care visit for 2021. You can visit our website for answers to many of your turf questions by visiting:

www.prestigestt.com

Letters will go out to those of you who have recently used Prestige for aeration. If you do not receive a letter by the end of February but do wish a quote, please call our office or e-mail accounting@prestigestt.com

So far, the weather has provided us with more of an average rainfall amount rather than the 8" we experienced at the start of 2020. With a close to average rainfall amount, it seems like an odd time for this reminder, but be sure to turn on your irrigation system by at least late March if it has been off for the winter season. We may be getting adequate rainfall, but this can quickly change and you should be prepared to provide adequate irrigation when the rain becomes scarce.

Though it seems like we can and have said this every winter, this winter has had something for everyone. We have experienced balmy spring like temperatures, times of constant rainfall and even snow!

For this round, we will be applying pre-emergent and post-emergent weed control, liquid fertilizer containing potassium and a low level of nitrogen to all turf types. Bermuda turf will receive additional slow release nitrogen fertilizer to aid the turf as it begins to break its winter semi-dormancy. This slow release fertilizer will gradually feed the turf for the whole season. Zoysia lawns however are on a different schedule from

bermuda. At this time, zoysia receives potassium and pre and post emergent weed control but only a trace amount of nitrogen. They will not receive their start up nitrogen until our next visit.

Poa annua

Poa annua may again be an issue in our lawns. In fescue, this weed is not treatable as poa and fescue are both cool season grasses and control of one would control the other. Thankfully, *Poa annua* is naturally controlled by the hotter temperatures we receive in late spring and dies off by late May or early June.

In warm season turfs, this weed is an unwelcome sight standing out against the still brown dormant turf. Poa prefers weaker areas of turf and does well in compacted soil. You may also see this and other weeds grow in areas that are exposed to heavy runoff where the pre-emergent has broken down. If you see weeds in your warm season turf, **do not** use Round-up® to spot treat. Regardless of what you read or hear, even dilute solutions of these chemicals can kill your turf even if applied during the winter. We remove winter weeds with herbicides that specifically target the weeds we encounter on your lawn without damaging the turf. While we do our best to treat poa each visit, it still may persist into late spring before dying off for the season.

To help manage Poa annua, a successful aeration/seeding of your fescue turf each fall will help keep the fescue stand fuller thereby reducing room for Poa to grow. In warm season turfs, aerating one or more times per season will help manage soil compaction while slowly building

topsoil. In the fall, you should allow your turf to grow out to help it recover from the summer season and to help strengthen its roots better preparing it for spring green up. This will help avoid winter kill which gives weeds room to grow. Lastly, many of these weeds, including poa, can be spread by lawn mowers. **If you have a mowing service they need to keep their equipment clean to avoid spreading weed seeds from one yard to another. If you mow your own turf, you need to maintain the same hygiene standards by occasionally cleaning the underside of your mower deck.** As you can see, keeping your turf in better health is the key to reducing the amount of poa in your turf.

Fescue

As we move into the spring, Fescue lawns will slowly improve in color and growth. Fescue lawns should not be aerated or seeded in the spring season and should not be dethatched like Zoysia or scalped like Bermuda. It is important to allow your Fescue to grow to and be maintained at 3-4". This will improve its root system thereby improving wear tolerance, disease resistance and allow it to better manage in the heat of the summer. All too often, we find Fescue lawns being cut too short and lawns that have been mowed straight through the fall and winter season. Mowing through the fall and winter damages developing seedlings and weakens the turf resulting in thin freeze damaged turf. At this time of year, the fescue does not need to be mowed weekly and should only be mowed if it is **ACTIVELY GROWING**. Fescue cannot tolerate low mowing and the stress it causes. This will lead to

greater disease problems and thinning of the turf as we progress through the summer. We have found fescue lawns that are kept at 3-4" have less disease problems and are in better condition at the end of the season than their stressed out and thinning counter parts that were maintained below 3". Remember, if your fescue turf is not actively growing it does not need to be mowed

Fall weather for Fescue establishment last year was better than what we have experienced in years past. We recommend evaluating any areas where your fescue struggles to determine the need for resodding. Areas that failed may require patches of sod to fill in. We recommend using fescue sod over seed since the sod does not require time and nice weather to germinate and grow. Most seeding jobs done in the spring will not be mature enough to withstand the summer heat and disease pressure. In any case, it is important to till up and allow the pre-emergent applied at round 1 and again in round 2 to dissipate for two weeks before installing sod. Putting down sod without this site prep can interfere with the roots' ability to properly establish into the soil.

As soil temperatures rise in March, the fescue begins to utilize the fertilizer and begins to grow. The individual clumps will thicken so the thin areas will be less noticeable. If we receive very cold temperatures, the growth will slow and turn yellow. It is important to note the fertilizer we utilize on your fescue turf is designed to release nitrogen slowly for the turf to use but only when the turf is actively growing. You will not see fescue really start to improve until soil temperatures are consistently into the 60's.

Bermuda

As the turf begins to green up, there are a few things you will need to do to prepare your turf for the growing season.

1. Scalp and remove all debris.

2. Be sure to core aerate. Do this at least one time per year. Leave the plugs as this helps develop topsoil.
3. Maintain 1" per week watering (irrigation or rainfall).
4. Begin mowing at least one time per week to maintain 1.5"- 2.5" mowing height. Reel mowed turf can be maintained lower during the growing season as long as mowing frequency is increased to a 3-5 day schedule and then the height is raised as high as possible starting in August.
5. Topdressing with sand is appropriate if done correctly, but no more than .25" is recommended. When topdressing with sand, it is crucial to aerate and only apply enough sand to fill the aeration holes to enhance water, air and nutrient flow into the root zone. Applying thick layers of sand can actually cause further compaction and surface crust formation which reduces air and water penetration and can trap roots at the surface causing summer burnout.. ****Please note that depending on the source of the sand, nutgrass nutlets may be included in the sand. This will create a nutsedge problem that will be beyond our control, will result in a higher application cost due to the increase in chemical use and our applicator's time and may take years to correct.**

Zoysia

1. As the zoysia begins to green up (which may be as late as May), cut and remove the old brown grass. Do not heavily scalp as zoysia does not tolerate heavy scalping.
2. If your zoysia turf has been reel mowed or is compacted, it is important to have your turf aerated.
3. If you have emerald zoysia, then you may need to dethatch the turf to thin out the old clogged layers of dead grass. Do not be aggressive with the dethatching; begin shallow, increasing the depth if needed. Be sure to remove any generated debris.
4. Maintain 1" per week watering (irrigation or rainfall).
5. After green up and growth begins, mow at least one time per week to

maintain a 2"- 3" mowing height. Reel mowed turf can be maintained slightly lower on zoysia, during the growing season, as long as mowing frequency is increased to a 3-5 day schedule and the height is raised starting in August.

6. Heavy topdressing with sand is NOT recommended in zoysia as it will likely not recover until mid summer.

Scalping And Aerating

Scalping your bermuda turf in the spring starts the growing season off right by removing left over debris. Scalping the turf down to just ABOVE the dirt speeds green-up by cutting the crown of the plant thereby releasing a growth hormone to start vigorous growth. When you do not scalp, the top layer of old turf causes a slow down in green up because it is robbing the newly emerging turf of essential nutrients at green up time. Our fertilizer applications become less effective, the turf is less green than your neighbor's and because the turf is weaker, the potential for disease activity, such as Winter Patch and Dollar Spot, increases dramatically. In addition, the effectiveness of subsequent applications of fungicide for disease activity is greatly reduced. Because the cost of fungicides is expensive, we must charge for these extra applications. If you do not aerate, your compaction level increases as does development of a soil crust layer. Soil crusting develops right at the soil surface making it impervious to water, air or nutrient penetration.

Another effect of compacted soils is that the roots must now spend an increased amount of energy and resources pushing through compacted soil. This energy is being taken away from other growth processes in the plant, weakening the entire system. You can see that eventually the plant becomes severely weakened and is more susceptible to pests and weather influences. Yearly core aeration can help manage compaction within tolerable levels.