TURF TIPS

The Turf Care Newsletter of Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd.®
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This Issue:

Volume 33, No. 2

This is your second turf care visit for 2023. You can visit our website for answers to many of your turf questions by visiting:

www.prestigestt.com

Letters have gone out to those of you who have recently used Prestige for aeration. If you have not received a letter but do wish a quote, please call our office or e-mail accounting@prestigestt.com

So far, the weather has provided us with an abundance of rainfall on the order of 7.23" which is about 2.5" over our average for January. With such a gaudy 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, excessive cold, and times of constant rainfall!

For this round, we will be applying the remainder of your pre-emergent and post-emergent weed control 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 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.

Fescue

As we move into the spring, Fescue lawns will slowly improve in color and growth. 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 <u>too short</u> 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 impacted by the arrival of early frosts. Our initial freezing temperatures occurred in middle October instead of our normal timing of first frosts occurring in late October or even November. This worked to slow down and even stop fescue seedling development. As a result, many of the seedlings were weak and damaged by our excessively cold weather in late December. 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 does not require time and nice weather to germinate and grow. When laying sod, it is important to till up and allow the pre-emergent applied at round 1 and 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. 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 <u>soil</u> temperatures are consistently into the 60's.

Scalping And Aerating

Scalping your <u>bermuda</u> 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

and our fertilizer applications become less effective. The result of this is that 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.

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 1.5-2.5" 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.

Moss Growth Is Very Heavy In Some Lawns This Year

Due to the fall and winter rains we are seeing an explosion of moss growth once again. Moss can be a great addition to areas that are designed to have a natural look to them but can be a headache otherwise. Moss grows in many different environments if the conditions are right. In most situations moss is simply growing where turf is weak or where turf doesn't grow at all. This usually means areas that are too wet and/or too shady for turf to grow. In these areas, it is best to try something other than growing turf.

For mossy areas that abut bed lines, recutting these bedlines to include the moss can be a quick and easy way to solve the issue. Larger areas can be turned into areas of dwarf mondo or other ground covers. In turf areas that you wish to reclaim from the moss, it can be very hard to get rid of the moss permanently. It has been long thought that because moss prefers a lower soil pH that over applying lime can reduce moss by driving up the soil pH. This approach can be dangerous. Your turf grows best in a soil pH between 5.5-6.5 and soil pHs that are too high or basic can be toxic by making essential nutrients overly available while making others not available at all causing a decline in turf vigor and health. Simply applying more lime to reduce moss can be detrimental to your turf and be counter productive. There are many products on the market that claim to help rid your turf of its moss. Using these products may be able to reduce the moss and can be a good option, though long term results should not be expected.

In order to reclaim a turf area from the moss monster, it is important to remember that if you do not change the current environment, the moss will always regrow. Renovating some or all of your turf area to physically remove the moss and then replanting your turf can buy you time before the moss returns. You will also need to make changes to drainage and sunlight to slow the regrowth of the moss, but it will regrow.