

TURF TIPS

The Turf Care Newsletter of Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd.®
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- Almost Time For Fescue Aeration and Seeding
- Mowing Guidelines
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Letters will go out to those of you who have recently used Prestige for aeration and seeding. If you do not receive a letter and wish a quote please call or e-mail us at accounting@prestigestt.com as soon as possible. Aeration and seeding requests must be made by AUGUST 23rd

This year, Prestige has been utilizing RealGreen computer software to streamline our office and become a fully digital operation. As a part of this effort, we will be moving to become paperless. Please call our office or send your email to accounting@prestigestt.com to put an email on file.

This is your fifth scheduled turf care visit for the year. In this application, cool and warm season turf will be receiving weed control as temperatures permit along with fungicide as needed to stop active disease. We will be more aggressive treating weeds in the fescue turf as a preparation for fall aeration and seeding. You may see a temporary yellowing of the turf around treated areas, though this will grow out over time after treatment.

Almost Time For Fescue Aeration And Seeding

Though the fescue turf always moves into the summer lush and thick, it is a given that by the end of summer the heat and disease will have thinned the turf to the point that reseeded is required. This is the case this year and every year.

Fall is the best time for aeration and seeding. Once you miss the fall window of opportunity, you cannot successfully seed in the spring to try to

replenish the stand. The bottom line: skipping the fall aeration and seeding means you will have even thinner turf all of next year. Thin turf does not compete well with weeds, hence you will have an unmanageable weed load.

If you do your own aerating and seeding, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Use quality hybrid turf type tall fescue. Use seed with at least 85% germination and a purity rate of at least 90%. These are the minimum percentages that one should accept.
- The rate for over-seeding existing fescue lawns is 5-8 # per thousand square feet. Thicker turf uses the lower rate, thinner turf requires the higher rate. Bare areas require 10# per thousand square feet.
- It is best to get the aerating and seeding done prior to late October for best germination and establishment.
- Make your maintenance company aware of your seeding job. **DO NOT MOW UNTIL THE SEEDLINGS ARE AT LEAST 3" TALL.** Then maintain at a height of 3". If the turf is not growing then DON'T MOW. Don't mow just to pick up fall leaves; blow instead! Needless mowing only creates compaction and wears out the new seedlings leaving you with less turf and possibly patchy results.

If you wish Prestige to provide your aerating and seeding then you must request the service each year. We do not assume or know you want this service unless you call. REQUESTS MADE AFTER AUGUST 23rd WILL INCLUDE A \$25 REROUTING FEE AND ANY REQUESTS MADE AFTER WE HAVE SERVICED AN AREA

WILL BE AT OUR DISCRETION

You should receive your reminder letter in early August. Unfortunately, since our primary mission is chemical application, we cannot accommodate special scheduling requests. We call the week before to let you know which week we will be out to give you time to prepare the fescue and mark your irrigation. **Please note:** it is important for any irrigation marking, mowing and other prep work to be completed by the Sunday preceding your scheduled aeration/seeding week. We do our best to always complete the weeks scheduled aeration/seeding jobs as early in the week as possible. This includes early Monday mornings so please have everything prepared the weekend BEFORE your scheduled week. Most weeks we are able to do our jobs on either the Monday or Tuesday of the week giving us leeway in the event of rain or other delays. Once we are on your property, we have a full day of jobs scheduled and do not have the time to wait for someone to mark their irrigation or to mow the turf. We respectfully ask that these jobs be done the week before so we are able to work through our schedule efficiently as possible. If you need more specific scheduling or can't do the necessary prep work in time, we can refer you to a maintenance company that may be able to help you on a more flexible schedule.

Prestige will start seeding operations, weather permitting, the week after Labor Day. While we try to work around times of excessive heat, we cannot wait for fall weather to start our aeration and seeding jobs. We expect to end our aeration and seeding by mid to late October. We

suggest that you target your own seeding operation for the same period.

Mowing Guidelines

➤ Mow weekly or more often to avoid firing (I am on a 3 day schedule).

➤ If brown streaks appear after you mow then you are getting **firing**. Firing appears in bermuda turf after mowing too closely or removing more than one-third of the leaf blade. *Firing is not disease related.

➤ As with all turf, be sure to maintain a **sharp blade** on your mower and keep the engine speed high.

➤ Rotary mower mowing height for warm season turf should be between 2" and 2 ½" and fescue turf should be kept at 3-4" to avoid summer burnout and stress. All too often we find fescue turf is being mowed at the same height as warm season turf which will cause summer dieback and a thin stand come fall.

➤ Properly maintaining your turf also means allowing your turf to grow out longer in the late summer and early fall to encourage your turf's root system to store enough sugars to fuel green up the following spring while minimizing incidences of early spring disease that attacks weak turf. All reel mowed turf should be switched to rotary mowing (or maintained at the highest reel mower setting) in late August to help it recover from the short frequent mowings throughout the summer.

Excessive Hot and Dry Weather in June/July

Summer has come through full force this year. In the month of June, we recorded a measly 1.75" of rain. Combined with the excessively hot temperatures our lawns have taken a beating. During times of excessive heat and little rain, warm season turf will start to lose color and slow top growth. As the turf hits more critical drought stresses it will start to brown in areas that are the driest. The turf will go dormant as a defense mechanism and lastly in severe conditions,

will die as the roots dry up. In warm season turf the turf will start to recover from drought damage, but will take a lot of water (or rain) to get the soil rehydrated again. In Fescue turf, areas may need to be reseeded in the fall before it can be recovered as fescue does not spread like warm season. Once the fescue plant dies, it is not regrown.

During late June and early July we saw drought stress and die back on many yards where the turf was not being given proper irrigation. During times of periodic rainfall the inadequacy of a light and frequent irrigation plan such as the standard 3 days a week for 15-20 minutes per zone is masked by rainfall. Once the rain stops and temperatures are in the middle 90s this plan shows its inadequacies when hotspots form in the turf in spite of your watering schedule. This is why we preach 1 time per week watering for 1" to mimic a heavy rainfall. Light frequent waterings keep the roots on the surface making them susceptible to extreme temperatures and burnout. Watering heavily pushes the roots deeper protecting them from extreme surface temperatures. In extreme hot and dry weather, it is recommended to water 1" 2 times per week to account for evaporation and greater water use. Take the time now to correct your irrigation clock to apply 1" of water 1 time per week as its base program. Utilizing a rain gauge will help you determine how long it takes for your system to apply 1" of water. After this is set, simply adjust for rainfall.

Summer Disease

So far due to the dry weather we have not had too much in the way of summer diseases. Diseases likely to develop during the summer are dollar spot in warm season turf and brown patch in fescue but these diseases need moisture to survive and since we have been (to this point) fairly dry, diseases haven't been able to form. We continue to spot apply fungicides where needed to help stop

these diseases where they are found. We suspect as our humidity creeps back into our weather so will these turf diseases.

Once we spot treat any diseases, it may take a while to recover since our fungicides only stop the disease activity; they do not cure it. The circles and spots in the turf have to grow out and be mowed off for these areas to disappear.

While we cannot control mother nature, there are some things we can do to help prevent summer diseases in our turf. Watering before dew fall or in the morning when the turf should be drying should be avoided because it extends the hours of leaf wetness and contributes to conditions favorable to the formation and spread of disease. Warm season turf can develop dollar spot or brown patch under these conditions while fescue develops brown patch. Our fungicides cannot always overcome increasingly heavy disease pressure.

As we have already seen but bares repeating is hotspots in the turf may look like disease but are not disease related; these areas are related to compacted areas in your lawn which have become severely dry during high temperature and low rainfall periods. If you see this problem, you can speed turf recovery by flooding the area with water to re-hydrate the soil. You can also use moisture manager products such as Ecosential or Cistern. These products work by pulling water into themselves creating moisture around the root system of the turf. I use this product on my turf to make the most of the rain since I have no in ground irrigation system. Ironically, you must water these products into the soil.

As you can see, properly watering your turf can help reduce summer time diseases in all turfs. Of course daytime summer rains can interfere but by using the overnight dew as a time to water, you are doing the best you can to minimize favorable disease conditions while reducing drought stress.