TURF TIPS

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

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This is your second turf care visit for 2025. 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 a slight bit below average rainfall for January at 3.03 and we have had some excessively cold spells with low temperatures in the low 20s or lower. Early to mid February 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.

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 and provide for color and growth into the season. Zoysia lawns, however, are on a different schedule from bermuda. As you may remember, last year's cool spring temperatures delayed zoysia green up until almost June. At this time, zoysia receives pre and post emergent weed control but only a trace amount of nitrogen. **Zoysia will green up as the SOIL temperatures warm above 60 degrees and cannot be pushed into greening up faster.** We will supply fertilizer to the zoysia turf later in the spring when it is prepared to use it. They will not receive their start up nitrogen until our next visit.

Newly Sodded Lawns

Congratulations if you have recently installed a new lawn of warm season turf! With the excitement of putting in new sod and having a new lawn, it is often over looked that your new lawn will be VERY WEEDY. When sod is installed when it is dormant, the sod will do little establishing until the soil temperatures have warmed enough (65-70 degrees) to start greening up and growing. During this time, we can only apply fertilizers we cannot apply ANY herbicides as weed controls will delay establishment and harm the new sod. Once the new turf is fully greened up and growing, we can then begin to use weed controls to reduce the weeds. It is also important to note that because spring green up is well after our pre-emergent weed controls, the turf will be weedy until the fall. If possible, it is always best to install warm season turf within its growing season as this shortens the establishment period and allows us to utilize weed controls sooner and even may be established enough to make a full fall pre/post emergent weed control application in the fall.

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 excessively dry and so not good if the seedlings were not properly watered. Our temperatures were close to normal and it was not excessively hot, but we saw very little rainfall. Most of the rainfall was of the feast or famine variety. July had 14" but only .8 in August and none in October. The hurricane is the only reason September received any rainfall at all. We say this as a reminder as we are seeing areas of fescue that did not establish well and will be thin this season. 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 al-

low 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 **soil** temperatures are consistently into the 60's.

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. The result of skipping this step 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 headache in areas it is unwanted. 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. 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. 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 though physical removal will provide a longer term solution.