

# TURF TIPS

The Turf Care Newsletter of Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd.®  
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This is your fourth scheduled turf care visit for the year. On Fescue turfs, we will be applying your systemic fungicide and addressing weeds as temperatures allow. Bermuda lawns will be given more fertilizer designed to feed the turf until dormancy in the fall. Zoysia turf was given their season long fertilizer at round 3 that is designed to provide important nutrients evenly through until fall. All warm season turfs will be spot treated as needed for disease and, as temperatures allow, any weeds present in the turf.

## Sharpen Those Blades!

As we move through the summer and mow our lawns each week, it is easy to get into the habit of breaking out the mower week after week without taking the time to check the mower blades to be sure they are still sharp. It is a tedious task and the last thing you want to do on a hot summer day, but dull blades can leave the turf torn and with a ragged appearance. For those of you who hire a maintenance company, if the tips of the turf look ragged rather than clean cut, you may wish to check with your maintenance company to be sure they regularly sharpen their blades. Dull blades increase disease incidence and make your turf look ragged due to the brown, torn edges. Bermuda turf is very hard on mower blade edges because of the amount of silica in the turf blades. Healthy Zoysia is so thick that a dull blade is guaranteed to cause the mowing to become bogged down. Fescue is easily torn by dull blades making it more susceptible to brown patch disease. Remember, the start of the mowing season should not be the first and only time you sharpen your blade. If you are mowing on a proper schedule, you should sharpen your blade each month or when it leaves a ragged appearance.

## Aeration in Bermuda and Zoysia

Spring is not the only time you can benefit from aeration!! Prestige offers aeration service in June and July in addition to our initial aeration offering in April and May to help reduce compaction and improve nutrient and water uptake in the root system. This service is especially important if you have not taken advantage of aeration service in the spring. Call our office to see if your lawn qualifies for our aeration service.

## Weekly Mowing and Weed Control Work Hand In Hand!

Mowing along with warmer temperatures will help lingering poa to die off as we progress into summer. **Weed control products cannot control weeds on their own.** They must be combined with frequent mowings to do their best. As summer approaches and high temperatures develop, weed control will be limited to spot treatment of nutgrass, ground ivy and dandelion. Weed controls can temporarily burn the turf if it is too hot. Most weed control products are severely limited or even outright eliminated when temperatures are above 85-90 degrees. This is where your **weekly mowing** and dethatching (if necessary) comes into play. **You must mow weekly to control all weeds.** Just because you have had pre-emergent and post-emergent weed controls applied does not necessarily mean you will be weed free. Some weeds, such as tree seedlings, dandelion, ground ivy, fireweed and spurge, are not prevented by the pre-emergent weed control. Post emergent herbicides only damage tree saplings and only moderately affect

the fireweed, while the other weeds are very resistant to weed control. Again, weekly mowing is the key to weed control along with the post emergent chemicals.

## Watering and A Reminder of Last Summer

Last summer we experienced times of severe drought coupled with excessive heat. With the exception of the 14" we received in July, our rainfall was exceptionally low June through October. September benefited from the hurricane which was the only rain we received in September. These weeks of little rain and excessive heat caused drought like conditions and hot spots even killing turf due to excessively dry conditions. These hot spots are often mistaken for disease though rarely are disease related. Disease needs moisture to sporulate and as temperatures reach into the mid to upper 90s with little moisture, disease can't form. In severe hot spots, once the ground is dry for so long the turfs' roots begin to die leading to turf death from lack of water. Most of these lawns were being irrigated and their owners surprised by the dry conditions in spite of their irrigation program. When checked with a soil probe, the dust would literally fall out of the probe! This is where watering for 10-15 min 3 times per week fails. When we are getting average rainfall with moderate temperatures this schedule is adequate, but with little to no rain and excessive temperatures this schedule does not provide deep enough irrigation and leads to hot spots and drought conditions. **Watering one time per week to get 1" of irrigation will allow the water to soak deeper into the soil. Temperatures above 95 degrees will require watering twice**

**per week delivering a full inch of water at each watering to account for evaporation.**

Plant systems are designed to pull up moisture from the soil to aid in photosynthesis and plant growth and are at their most efficient as they utilize this moisture almost to the point of drought stress. In most cases with no rain, this happens to take roughly a week. After this point, the plant starts dehydrating and going into stress from lack of moisture. As the plant starts heading into drought stress it is ready for you to turn on your irrigation and re-hydrate the soil. This is called "watering on demand." Many times we see systems that are set for 3-4 days a week for 15-20 minutes per day. **This provides only shallow watering and is inadequate because it is not enough to soak deep into our clay soils.** In our heavy clay soils, it takes at least this long to begin to see the water soaking into the soil. A heavy irrigation of 1" will help work the water deeper into the soil. Your goal here is for the water to seep as deep as you can into the soil. Deeper irrigation allows the turf's roots to follow the water down into the soil protecting them from summer heat, excessive wear, and the disease problems caused by weak turf.

Lastly, it is important to adjust the timing of your irrigation to water between 10pm-5am (roughly dew fall). By watering at night you can avoid a heavy loss from evaporation during the day and reduce the hours of leaf wetness thereby minimizing disease (especially in Fescue turf). Of course, mother nature quite often throws monkey wrenches into our best laid plans by not cooperating, but this is the blueprint and a starting point to follow and fine tune the irrigation of your turf. Be sure to use your rain gauge as a guide to have an accurate account of your rainfall. Some areas may need more or less depending on other factors, but this watering plan will help keep everything hydrated.

### **Summer Turf Disease**

Dollar spot always occurs in warm season turf during the summer especially in turf that is stressed due to **compaction, improper watering, or reel mowing**. In lawns that are properly maintained, dollar spot is much less of a problem but can still be an issue.

Our basic program is designed to prevent dollar spot by using slow release fertilizers to provide an even growth pattern and nitrogen release. If we do see dollar spot in your turf during our regularly scheduled visit we will treat the affected areas. Re-occurring or rampant disease issues may require a complete fungicide treatment with more advanced fungicides at additional cost.

For Fescue, our basic program includes a systemic fungicide at the beginning of the brown patch season which is usually adequate enough to protect the Fescue from disease though we do spot treat for disease during your regular summer visit. Depending upon the weather and the level of disease activity, additional fungicide may be required between your regular visits.

### **Moles!**

Moles are, unfortunately, a recurring problem in our lawns and have been more rampant this season than in the past. Moles tunnel through yards and make random patterns throughout turf areas looking for things to eat or they are merely traveling from point to point. Moles dine on many things including earthworms, crickets and various other small treats **along with grubs**. **The presence of moles does not necessarily mean that your lawn has a grub problem.** If you are told that you have a grub problem because your lawn has moles, go and pull on the areas of turf that is being affected. If the turf rolls back like carpet, than yes you have grubs feeding on the roots of the turf but most likely, the moles are present because you have earth worms. It is worth noting that while moles do eat grubs,

earthworms are preferable. In fact, moles will collect earthworms in the fall, bite their heads off and because earthworms can live for months without their heads, will be stored for a fresh food source over winter time! Much of the tunneling, especially in the fall, are moles scavenging to fill their earthworm pantry. While your turf's roots are not on the mole's diet, they are harmed as the mole tunnels leave the roots to dry out from air exposure. Keep these tunnels hydrated with water and walk along the tunnels, pressing the soil back into place to help prevent roots from drying out.

**Tomcat Mole Killer works great in controlling moles. Please note that Prestige DOES NOT offer mole mitigation. Wildlife removal companies such as Northwest Exterminating (866-536-1872) may be a good alternative if you do not wish to use the bait or feel over run. At first it may appear the Tomcat is not working because you see additional tunneling after treatment. It does require a few days for the mole killer to work and also if you have multiple moles it will require multiple treatments and may take a year or more of consistent efforts to eliminate the colony living under or in the near vicinity of your turf.**