

TURF TIPS

The Turf Care Newsletter of Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd.®
www.prestigestt.com 770-476-7781

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Letters and emails will go out to those of you who have recently used Prestige for fall fescue aeration and seeding. If you do not receive a letter and wish a quote please call the office or e-mail us at: accounting@prestigestt.com as soon as possible.

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.

If you would like 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. Please make your requests as soon as possible as this service fills fast and late requests cannot always be scheduled.

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 reseeding 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 at least 3". If the turf is not growing then **DON'T MOW.** Don't mow just to pick up fall leaves; blow them off instead! Needless mowing only creates compaction and wears out the new seedlings leaving you with less turf and possibly patchy results.

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 your bermuda, then you are get-

ting **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.

Summer Disease Update

Summer disease has been challenging through the spring especially in the zoysia through the first half of summer. We continue to spot apply fungicides where needed to help stop brown patch in fescue turf and dollar spot in the warm season lawns. By improving our program to apply slow release nitrogen at rounds 2 and 4, we have reduced the amount of dollar spot in the bermuda turfs. Keep in mind, areas of disease may take a while to recover since our fungicides only stop the disease activity; they do not cure it. We have seen a few lawns with areas that have died off due to the excessively dry summer last year that damaged roots and now struggle with disease and high temperatures we are experiencing in July. Due to the already damaged roots, these areas usually crash when the rainfall stops and coupled with high heat. Deep watering is

needed to allow the turf to recover. Dead thatch should also be lightly raked out to encourage regrowth. The circles and spots in the turf will take time to recover and fungicide is only the first step to encouraging recovery.

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 zoysia patch under these conditions while fescue develops brown patch. Our fungicides cannot always overcome increasingly heavy disease pressure.

Hotspots in the turf are not disease related, but 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 by avoiding turf stress caused by hot and dry conditions. 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.

Maintenance Days

As we move through the summer time, it is important to note we do our best to avoid arriving to do your turf care on the same day your main-

tenance company shows up to mow your turf. This active avoidance ensures the quality of your application and that it will deliver the best results for your turf. There are many applications we apply to your turf that are not degraded by mowing, but we operate out of caution by trying to avoid maintenance days.

We do our best to track maintenance days on each of our lawn care customers, but it is impossible for us to keep track of the ever changing schedule of days for each of our customers and the myriad of different maintenance companies providing services on our accounts. If your maintenance day changes, please call or email our office so we can update this information. ****Because of how route work is done, we are only able to recognize 1 day of the week for maintenance.** If your maintenance day is not set or utilizes 2 or more days of the week, we will only be able to work around 1 of these days. We respectfully ask that if we come on one of these days, that your maintenance company adjust their plans to allow for 1 day rest for the turf. Also note: we cannot simply reapply an application after maintenance crews mow over our application. There is no way to determine how much or little of an application still exists and reapplication can lead to turf damage from over treatment. Please inform your maintenance companies to respect our chemical application signs that are all dated and to give our application 1 day rest before mowing since we cannot simply "redo" an application.