

TURF TIPS

The Turf Care Newsletter of Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd.®
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Please be sure to update your maintenance day and other contact information so we have the most current email and phone numbers on file. If you live in a gated community, please be sure we are on your guest list so we can have access to your property.

This is your first turf care visit for 2024. Remember you can check out our website by browsing:

www.prestigestt.com

Winter Weather

With Christmas behind us and everyone getting back to their daily grinds, our focus starts returning to our turf. Winter weather and freezes can have a major impact on our cool season (fescue) turf. Many areas of turf are impacted by the frigid temperatures and the wind chills leading to desiccated turf and yellowing turf.

This is the turf's response to the wind and freezing temperatures that caused moisture loss in the grass blades. Unfortunately the only fix is to allow the turf to grow out and mow off the damage. Adequate and consistent winter rainfall will greatly mitigate any severe weather effects by maintaining soil moisture. Moist soil retains warmth much more efficiently than dry soil and consequently turf root damage is reduced. Be sure to monitor your rainfall closely so you can fill in any dry spells we may experience with irrigation. Allowing turf or plants, especially new turf or plants, to dry out during the winter can lead to desiccation of its root zone and the turf or plants succumbing to freezing temperatures causing severe damage or death. Remember that just because the temperatures are cold doesn't mean the soil doesn't get dry. Supplementing rainfall with irrigation during dry conditions is necessary to keep the soil hydrated even through the winter.

First Visit of the Season

In this first winter visit we will be applying pre-emergent and post-emergent weed control to both the warm season and fescue turf. Our turf program is based on proven technology and research. We constantly look for new formulations and products to give us more uniform release of nitrogen and also less nitrogen loss to volatilization. The fescue turf has already received a long term slow release fertilizer at round 6 of 2025 that will slowly feed the fescue until late spring.

Application of this long term fertilizer will minimize any color drop off over winter by supplying a more stable nitrogen source. Bermuda turf will receive its green up fertilizer on our second application to aid the turf as it begins to break its winter semi-dormancy. Lawns with Zoysia turf will be fertilized at round 3 as it requires less nitrogen input than Bermuda turf.

Poa Annu Control

Many of you with warm season yards may notice a clumpy light green weed with white seed heads growing during winter time in various spots in your turf. This weed is Poa Annu or annual bluegrass. While improved varieties are actually used on northern golf courses, down here in the south it is an annual winter time visitor that sticks out like a sore thumb. Weaker areas of turf under trees and in areas where water drains are areas most likely to be populated with this weed. Poa annua prefers growing in areas with compacted soil though we have found it in all types of soil densities. Poa is worse in years in which we have excessive fall and winter rainfall. The rainfall can deplete the pre-emergent barrier faster, especially in areas of poor drainage or areas prone to runoff, allowing this tenacious weed to grow more aggressively in the spring.

Controlling the Poa is a yearly challenge to say the least. Like most weeds, our battle starts before the first weed seeds germinate. For the most part, Specticle does a great job in preventing most of the Poa from germinating in your warm season turf. Your round 6 pre-emergent application on the warm season lawns sets up

a barrier to help prevent Poa from growing in. To try and reduce the severity of Poa annua growth in the late spring time period, we adjusted our Specticle application to later in the fall. Hopefully this translates to less Poa germinating in the spring. We shall see.

At rounds 1-3, we spot treat the Poa that has grown in over the fall and winter. Although the Poa in your turf has been treated, you should not expect to see immediate results as our treatments quite often require warmer air temperatures of at least 60-70 degrees to absorb into leaves to begin to work. Full die off of treated Poa plants should not be expected before late spring when temperatures are consistently in the 80's. Aerating your bermuda turf at least one time per year will help manage compaction and reduce Poa growth. Unfortunately, even doing everything right sometimes doesn't always translate into a Poa free yard. Areas of poor drainage and/or weak areas of turf will always yield Poa to some degree. Some yards just germinate Poa each year and will require more post emergent treatments than others no matter what mitigating steps have been taken.

Since fescue turf does not get pre-emergent in the fall due to the aeration and seeding and is not compatible with Specticle herbicide Poa can grow in fescue turf stands. Therefore, keeping your fescue seeded each fall and mowing your turf at 3-4" when it is growing to keep it healthy can reduce Poa in fescue lawns. Bagging the grass clippings while the Poa is present can reduce seeds in the turf.

Fescue Report

As we move through winter, there is nutrient uptake during cold weather and short winter days, but the nitrogen in the fertilizer will not be released for the turf until the soil temperatures warm. You still may not see the deep green color just yet until day length increases and we get consistently warmer weather, consistently

warmer soil temperatures, and consistent rainfall or irrigation. These are the factors that not only continue to move the fertilizer into the root zone but also increase the uptake of the nutrients by the roots into the plant tissues. The simple fact that fertilizer was applied to the soil is only one small part of the process.

Fescue growth also slows during winter. Fescue builds root systems and stores carbohydrates (energy) over winter when soil and air temperatures allow, but even fescue slows its growth when temperatures are cold. Its root system and cells are growing and functioning but as with green up, you will see very little, if any, **visible top growth** until we get the crucial factors of consistently warmer weather, consistently warmer soil temperatures, increased day length and consistent rainfall or irrigation. After successive days of very cold weather, the fescue will appear very thin and off color but will begin to darken as soil temperatures rise. Other than monitoring your winter rainfall and addressing the possible need for supplemental irrigation when the temperatures allow, your turf will over-winter with only a little help from you and will begin to grow rapidly as we move into April.

Weeds in the fescue turf are normal this time of year due to the lack of a fall pre-emergent herbicide. **No pre-emergent can be applied to the fescue turf in the fall since doing so would prevent the seeds from germinating during aeration and overseeding time.** What weeds the winter freezes do not kill, the first two applications of the new year will address.

Winter Care For Warm Season Turf

Every year as we move through the winter into spring, we expect to see disease activity in the warm season turf including Fairy Ring, winter patch and other spring diseases. A spring application of fungicide will

stop the disease and encourage the turf to recover. A service call between visits for disease treatment will be at additional cost if you are on our basic program. As always, if we find active disease in your turf while on your property, spot treatment of the affected areas is included in your lawn application. Some situations may require full fungicide applications and your applicator can give you a quote for adding our spring fungicide application to your program for enhanced protection. If you find areas of possible disease in your turf, you can always email us a picture for proper ID and we can give you a quote on adding a spring fungicide application to your existing program.

The warm season turfs received a fall application of weed control and will again receive weed controls in the first two applications of the new year to address any weeds that may have survived through the winter time. While Prestige provides the necessary nutrients, you need only provide water until spring green up when it is time to scalp and aerate your Bermuda turf. A full scalp down is NOT recommended on Zoysia turf but some Zoysia lawns may benefit from spring aeration and dethatching.

If you have used our aeration services within the past two years, you will receive your aeration letter in late February. If you want a quote for aeration, please contact our office.