

Top five activities for a healthy lawn



Verti-cutting removes excess thatch, allowing the lawn to breathe, and makes watering and lawn applications more effective.

DOUG FREER

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Ah, yes, springtime – lush lawns and gorgeous gardens. Your spring cleanup is a vital first step to good lawn health. Removing all of the leaves, sticks, nuts and other debris out of the lawn will help the grass to breathe. Once you've raked over the yard, take the next steps to build a healthy lawn. It's the best defense against pest-related problems and it will reduce the need for pesticides.

Top five healthy lawn-building activities this spring:

1) Aerate: Lawn aeration is the mechanical process of removing soil cores from the lawn. The holes open up the soil and allow the roots to get more oxygen and make fertilizing, watering and other lawn applications more effective. Aerating helps to build stronger roots, making your lawn more drought- and pest-resistant. You can aerate from mid-April to late May, when the soil is moist.

2) De-thatch: Some thatch is good, but more than a half-inch of thatch diminishes the effectiveness of watering and lawn applications. Most

heavy lawn renovations involve extensive work to remove or aggressively manage thatch. De-thatch or verti-cut your lawn to remove some of this thatch on a regular basis and your lawn will be grateful. You may need to spot-seed afterwards, so de-thatching earlier -- if possible by end of April -- will give your new seed a chance to germinate and grow in before summertime heat arrives.

3) Fertilize: Nutrients are essential for lawn health. There are organic or traditional fertilizer products that will deliver the proper amount of nutrients to your lawn. Consistent application of fertilizer in the right amount is critical to the long-term health of the grass. Get your first application of product down early, before the forsythia blooms drop. Plan on four to five applications through the season, timed generally about five to eight weeks apart with the major holidays. Your second application falls on Memorial Day, third around Independence Day, fourth on or about Labor Day and your fifth and last application prior to Thanksgiving. The products will change based on the application and

the current weather – so consult with a professional service provider or someone knowledgeable at the local garden center.

4) Add Organics: Build soil health by applying or top-dressing your lawn with organic material. Products like Milorganite, leaf compost and Sweet-Peat are all good ways to get organic material into the lawn. Organics will help to break down thatch, improve the soil composition and structure, and ultimately improve the health of the soil by creating a better environment for microbial activity, which is vital to the health of your lawn.

5) Spot-seed: Thin or bare areas should be spot-seeded to prevent weeds from getting a foothold in your lawn. For best results, the new seed needs to be in contact with the soil. Either scratch the surface of the soil, top-dress with new soil, seed or aerate the lawn twice and then spot-seed thin and bare areas. New seed will not begin to germinate until soil and air temperatures are over 50 degrees. Even so, early spring seeding now is okay as the spring rains will begin to prepare the seed and make it ready to pop when the temperatures warm.

Spring is the ideal time to get your lawn in shape for the season. The combination of these activities is sure to improve your lawn and get it ready for the summer season. For additional free information about lawn renovation activities, e-mail: info@lawnlad.com with "Lawn renovation" in the subject line.

Douglas Freer is a Cleveland Heights native and the owner of Lawn Lad, Inc. Lawn Lad provides residential landscape services in the Heights area. Call 216-371-1935 or visit www.lawnlad.com.