LAWNS AND TURF: CARE AND MAINTENANCE

MOWING

Post Construction A new lawn, regardless of being seed or sod, should be mowed as soon as it reaches regular mowing height. The mower blade should be sharp; a dull blade might rip the seedling out of the soil. After the turf is established, regular weekly mowing during the growing season is the main task in maintaining a lawn. **During extremely hot conditions, when no growth occurs mowing is not necessary.**

Mowing Height (Usually 1½"- 2") is measured from the mower blade to the ground. During summer months, a mowing height of 2½" to 3 inches will reduce water and fertilizer needs. Mowing at the wrong height is among the reasons many lawns are in poor condition. The higher grass is cut, the deeper its roots grow. Deeper roots increase grass vigor and drought tolerance. Taller grass competes better with weeds, reducing the need for weed control.

Mowing Technique Always alternate the direction of your cuttings, going horizontally and vertically across the lawn. For a neat look, cut the lawn diagonally.

Leave the Clippings

- They provide natural, organic nitrogen to the lawn
- They keep moisture in
- They help to minimize weeds

FERTILIZING

Contact TruNorth to asses and apply any and all fertilizers and herbicides for your own safety as well as the safety and health of your landscape

Homeowners seeking to "green up" their lawns often over fertilize. The excess amounts of soluble nitrogen produces lush growth, which is attractive to bugs, sod webworms, nematodes and brown patch fungal disease. Over fertilization also increases the necessity of mowing and the buildup of thatch. Thatch is a breeding site for pests and diseases and is costly to remove. Iron applications "green up" the grass without stimulating growth.

Other problems occur with soluble nitrogen fertilizers. They are carried by runoff from rain or irrigation into bodies of water. Do not exceed 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet per application. Use fertilizers with at least 30 percent controlled release nitrogen.

Weed Control

The development and maintenance of a dense, healthy lawn is the best way to reduce weed problems.

PREEMERGENT herbicides prevent germination of weed seeds

POSTEMERGENT herbicides are applied to existing weeds

Applications of herbicides intended for post emergent weed control will only kill weeds present at the time of application. They do not prevent new weeds from emerging. It is important to remember weeds must be actively growing when herbicides are applied.

Liquid and granular formulations of herbicides can be equally effective if they are used properly. Neither should be applied if rain is expected within 24 hours of application. For best results, the turf should not be mowed or watered for at least 24 hours following application of either granular or liquid products.

Pre or post emergent effectiveness depends on:

- Matching the chemical to the situation: weed types should be Identified by life cycle (annuals or perennials) and leaf form (grasses or broadleaves)
- Proper application at the label rate
- Applying at the proper time

Core Aerating

A healthy root system is a must for an attractive lawn. Oxygen in the soil is vital. Our region's heavy clay composition often inhibits roots. Core aeration improves rooting and compact soils without destroying the turf. Aeration on bluegrass and tall fescue lawns is best done in the fall, September through October. Spring is also acceptable, and for heavily compacted lawns fall and spring aeration may be required. For the average lawn once a year is all that is needed.

Be sure the soil is damp in order to get the maximum benefit from core aeration. A dry soil will inhibit the penetration into the soil.

Leave the plugs of soil removed during aeration in place to naturally break down. As the soil plugs decompose the soil naturally settles helping to breakdown the thatch, renewing the lawn.

Dethatching

Thatch is a dense layer of decomposing organic matter that forms in the upper levels of a lawn. It can create a barrier that slows water and nutrient penetration to the roots, gradually causing the health and appearance of the lawn to degrade.

You can remove thatch in various ways. A hand-held dethatching rake with knifelike teeth can be used on small lawns, although it is hard work. You can also rent a gas-powered dethatcher, often called a power rake or vertical mower, which slices through the thatch with rotating blades. Either technique cuts up the thatch. The dead organic matter is raked up and discarded. Dethatching is best done just before the lawn begins to grow vigorously-fall or early spring for cool-season grasses.