



FALL LAWN CARE CLEANUP GUIDE

THE FALL SEASON IS UPON US AND WINTER IS QUICKLY APPROACHING!



START PREPARING LAWN FOR WINTER Autumn, with its cooler temperatures and occasional rainfall, is the ideal time to prepare your lawn for next spring.

Many homeowners think lawns need less care in the fall because the grass grows more slowly. In fact, just the opposite is true. During this time of year, grass is busily absorbing energy, moisture, and nutrients in preparation for a long, dormant winter.

Give it a little attention now, and you'll be rewarded with a lush, healthy spring lawn.

KEEP WATERING YOUR LAWN! With cooler temperatures you won't need to water as much, but you still need to water--2-3 times per week (.5" to 1") depending upon weather conditions. Water in the morning around 6:00 am. If you have blown out your irrigation system and the weather is mild and dry, use a hose and sprinkler.

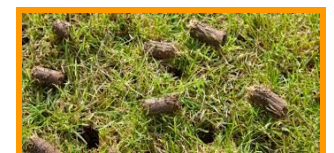


CONTINUE TO MOW YOUR LAWN, as needed, throughout the fall. As the season draws to a close, gradually drop the mower's blade to its lowest setting for the last two cuttings of the year. As you lower the blade, remember not to trim off more than one-third of the grass blades at any one time. Shortening the cutting height will allow more sunlight to reach the crown of the grass. There will be less leaf to turn brown during the winter and less leaf to be matted down by snow. Matted grass can cause issues and death!!

RAKING LEAVES WEEKLY is no one's idea of fun, but it's important to remove fallen leaves from your lawn as soon as possible. Don't wait until all the leaves have fallen from the trees to start raking. Fallen leaves become wet from rain and morning dew, stick together, and form an impenetrable mat that can suffocate the grass and breed fungal diseases. An alternative to raking leaves is to use a lawnmower fitted with a collection bag or vacuum system.



AERATE THE SOIL Not just a Spring thing! Fall is an ideal time to aerate your lawn so that oxygen, water, and fertilizer can easily reach the grass' roots. You can rent a gas-powered, walk-behind lawn aerator. The self-propelled machine will quickly punch holes into the soil and extract plugs of dirt. You can also simply hire a landscaping contractor.



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Fall fertilization is the most important for future grass health, especially if you only fertilize once per year. Grass leaves grow much more slowly as the weather turns cool, but the grass roots and rhizomes continue to grow quickly. (Rhizomes are the horizontal plant stems that lie just beneath the soil's surface; they produce the blades of grass above and the roots below.) A fall application delivers essential nutrients for the grass to grow deep roots and to keep nutrients on reserve for a healthy start next spring. Wait until mid-to-late fall, then apply a lawn WINTER fertilizer, which is specially formulated to be higher in potassium than regular lawn food. Potassium is the nutrient that makes grasses more winter hardy.



Time to control Weeds (Again!) If broadleaf weeds like dandelions have taken over your lawn, now's the time to fight back. Weeds, like most plants, are in the energy-absorbing mode during the fall. They're drinking in everything that comes their way, including weed killers. Apply an herbicide now and the weeds won't return in the spring. Read the package label before use. Most herbicide manufacturers recommend applying the weed killer during early-to-mid autumn, when daytime temperatures are consistently above 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

Overseeding Autumn is a great time of year to overseed any bare, bald spots in your lawn. You can use plain seed or a repair mix that incorporates mulch. Make sure you buy the correct seed variety as your current lawn. Grasses are not all the same!!

The first step is to rake out some of the dead in the area. You don't have to remove it completely. "Fan" a very thin layer of soil/compost mix over the area. Next, spread the seed lightly without overcrowding. Finally, lightly drag the seed into the soil with the back of your hand or the back of a rake. This will insure that the seed is in full contact with the ground, but not buried. Water every other day the seed bed moist while the seed grows.



University of Wyoming Extension Offices: UW offices offer various help for the homeowner! Each UW Extension county office has horticultural reference information on hand ranging from fact sheets to on-site problem diagnostics (services vary by county). Each county office can also assist in sending soil, plant, insect, and disease samples to appropriate laboratories on the University of Wyoming campus for testing and diagnostics. There are usually fees and forms associated with these services. Consumer horticulture issues can also be handled by Master Gardeners in some counties.

The University of Wyoming Extension horticulture program offers an array of fact sheets, some of which are available on the UW Extension web site: <http://www.uwyo.edu/uwe>

For county extension offices, go to <http://www.uwyo.edu/uwe/county>

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