

Spring Lawn Care Cleanup Basics for a Strong and Healthy Lawn



Time to Think Spring!

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Having A Great Lawn Begins in the Spring!

Overall Clean-up: Mid-March is the time to get those fallen leaves, branches and neighborhood trash up from the yard and flower beds. Power blowers work best, but if you don't have a blower use a rake to get to the debris. Be sure to go lightly on the raking! If your lawn is still wet, wait to rake until it's dry. Use a springy, light rake to "fluff up" the lawn, separating grass shoots and increasing air circulation. Get a good overview of the state of your lawn-- dead spots, matted patches, thatch or compacted soil. It is advised that you avoid the practice of aggressively raking until the lawn is quite firm-- usually in late April or even May. Also, be sure to clean up the dog poo while you're out there-- your lawn will thank you.



Test your Soil's PH: There is no better way to save money on water and soil amendments than getting a handle on what your lawn actually needs. Do-it-yourself soil test kits are a great way to learn about soil health, and can be purchased from Korby Sod, at a home improvement store or your local nursery. You can also purchase testing meters that measure pH, moisture and light. A soil test determines whether your soil is acidic, neutral or alkaline, and indicates which elements are missing and how much to add to remedy the problem. Since soil is made up of minerals, organic matter (living and dead), healthy soil provides nutrients and serves as a foundation for healthy plants. Improve your soil and plant health and enjoy a beautiful lawn or garden for a lifetime.

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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>

Overseeding: Got bare patches or winter kill? Early spring is the time to lay down seeds to patch these areas. You can use plain seed or a repair mix that incorporates mulch. 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 ensure that the seed is in full contact with the ground, but not buried.



If you seed in late March, don't water the new seed. The spring weather will probably take care of getting the seed off to a good start. In late April or May, you will need to water at once and keep the seed bed moist for 30 days while the seed grows.



Apply Fertilizer: Many homeowners apply way too much fertilizer at the first sign of green grass growth. In reality, the best thing to do is to apply a light amount of fertilizer in early spring, and then apply a larger dose a bit later in the season, after the initial growth rush. It may seem early to start fertilizing but if you're looking for the "Best Yard on the Block" award, fertilizing now is going to help your lawn wake up quicker and stronger.



Apply Pre-Emergent Herbicide: It's often easier to fight weeds before they even emerge, rather than waiting until they rear their ugly heads. Mid-March is the best time to control crabgrass and other weeds because they will not be growing yet, but will begin very soon. Herbicide is less effective once weeds have significantly grown and developed. At that point, good ol' fashion weed plucking may be your best option.

MID-MARCH to EARLY-APRIL - Korby Sod recommend applying JONATHAN GREEN GREEN-UP with CRABGRASS PREVENTER.

MID MAY to EARLY-JUNE - Korby Sod recommends applying JONATHAN GREEN GREEN-UP WEED & FEED.

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Prepare your Mower: Would you allow a hairstylist to cut your hair with a pair of dull scissors? It's time to tune-up your lawn mower and sharpen or replace your lawn mower blades. Dull blades tear the grass leaf instead of cutting it smoothly. Tearing weakens the grass plant and can promote disease and insects. Be sure to clean matted grass from the underside of the mower. Is it time for a new spark plug? Engine Oil? Fuel Filter? If you need assistance, consult an expert in your area.



Different grass types have different optimum mowing lengths. For Bluegrass and Fescue, a height of about 2 to 2.5 inches for the first few spring mowings is good. After that you should raise the mowing deck to a height of about 3 inches. It's never healthy for your lawn if you cut more than 1/3 of the grass height at a time, and be sure to sharpen those blades again in late July or early August if you have an average lot size. One last tip--change your mowing pattern each time you mow. This will prevent wearing of track marks on your lawn.

Aeration: In late April, revisit your soil health by aerating. Aeration involves perforating the soil with small holes to allow air, water and nutrients to penetrate the grass roots. This helps the roots grow deeply and produce a stronger, more vigorous lawn. The main reason for aerating is to alleviate soil compaction.

Dethatching: Healthy grass has some thatch. Korby Sod does not recommend dethatching unless you know for a fact you have an excessive thatch issue. A thatch layer less than 1/2" thick is not a problem. If the thatch layer gets thick enough that water and air have trouble getting to grass roots, that is excessive. To measure the thickness of thatch, poke through the grass until you find the brown layer near the bottom of the grass blade. With your finger or a stick, poke a hole through the brown layer to the top of the soil. Measure the thickness of the thatch. A vigorous raking or power raking should only be done in late April or early May.

