

## LAWN CARE

### Mowing

- ? In early spring start mowing your lawn on the highest setting and gradually lower the mower to the optimum height - see below.
- ? Avoiding setting the blades too low as this will result in the 'scalping' that will turn the lawn brown and reduce growth.
- ? Always ensure the mower blades are sharp as blunt blades will rip the grass and turn the ends brown.
- ? Where possible use a grass box to collect clippings, as this will prevent a build up of thatch.

### Watering

Watering is necessary for young lawns but a mature lawn should look after itself for most of the year. It is, however, worth watering your lawn in long dry periods. To prevent wasteful evaporation and scorching, watering is best done in the morning or evening. Water well so the roots get wet, but not so much that puddles appear.

### Scarifying

Scarifying is the process that removes the 'thatch' that occurs at the base of the lawn. Thatch removal lets air penetrate the lawn and promotes strong base growth and a healthy sward. Scarifying should be done in early autumn but the benefits won't be reaped until spring - in fact, your lawn may look worse for a while, but it's worth it!

Scarifying can be done with a Spring-Tined or Scarifying Rake which is simply pulled hard across the lawn, removing the dead grass and thatch which can then be composted. The other option is to hire a scarifying machine, which will do the job in half the time and with half the effort (but with five times the expense!)

### Aerating

Aerating should be done in autumn, after Scarifying. Aerating alleviates compaction and increases drainage by making holes in the turf, which are then filled with the Top Dressing. Aerating can be done by pushing a garden fork into the lawn at 15cm intervals. The fork should go all the way in and then be pushed back and forth to widen the holes. The same job can be done with a Hollow Tining Tool or with a mechanical Aerator.

### Top Dressing

A Top Dressing should be applied after the lawn has been Aerated. Top Dressing should consist of 6 parts sand, 3 parts loam and 1 part compost (it is also available by the bag, ready mixed) and should be dressed at a rate of 3kg per sq metre.

The Top dressing should be brushed into the lawn so it penetrates the Aeration holes.

### Feeding

To avoid problems with disease, patchy growth, moss and weeds, feed your lawn regularly. We recommend two applications per year; once in late spring and again in early autumn. A good feed will strengthen the grass preventing weeds from appearing and keeping the lawn green. Always follow the manufacturers instructions and don't over feed as this may scorch the lawn.

### Weeding

Regular Mowing, Feeding and Watering should prevent most weeds, but some will still appear. They are best dealt with manually, but chemical weed killers are also available - see manufacturers instructions.

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT LAWN

Lawns come in many guises from a perfect putting green to swaying meadow. To make the best of your lawn you need to pick a style to suit its position as well as your taste.

### Fine Lawns

- ? Use as a foundation for a formal garden.
- ? Requires a lot of maintenance.
- ? Will not withstand wear.

Cutting Height	6-7mm
Sowing Rate	35g per sq metre
Mow	1-3 times per week

### General Purpose Lawns

- ? For regular use.
- ? Establishes quickly.
- ? Requires moderate maintenance.

Cutting height	20mm
Sowing rate	20g per sq metre
Mow	1 per week

### Lawns in the Shade

- ? Consists of strong resilient grasses.
- ? Can withstand low light and moderate use.
- ? Requires moderate maintenance.

Cutting Height	25mm
Sowing rate	35g per sq metre

Mow

1 per week

### PREPARING THE SITE

Once you have decided what sort of lawn you want (see over), you need to prepare the soil. This is the most important step in creating your perfect lawn and can only be done before the turf or seed is in place - so don't take short cuts!

Dig over and remove weeds, stones and other debris, this can be a long job but needs doing well - dig deep for increased drainage and aeration. It is often advisable to add a drain at this point. Dig a hole or trench at the lowest point on the lawn and fill the base with stones and gravel, top up with soil and treat it like the rest of the garden - if drainage is a real problem a more robust method would be preferable and we would recommend that you seek further advice.

The soil can now be improved with organic matter such as well rotted manure. This will add nutrients and improve the structure of the soil, helping your grass grow greener. The addition of sand will also improve the site - especially in heavy London clay.

The ground is now ready to be levelled. For an informal lawn or meadow this can be done by eye, but for a fine lawn or for an area for ball games you'll need a more professional finish. Mark some pegs 5cm/2" from the top. With a hammer knock in a peg so that the mark sits at the desired ground level. Carry on until there is a row of pegs along the edge of the site. Bridge two pegs with a straight edged plank and check the level with a spirit level. Continue across the site until a flat bed of pegs is achieved. Once all the pegs are in place, level the soil to the height of the marks on the pegs. Remove the pegs.

If you are sowing seed you will need to leave the site in its unfinished state for two weeks. This will give perennial weeds a chance to appear and this gives you a chance to deal with them before they become a problem in your lawn. Remove perennial weeds either with a spray or dig and hoe them out manually.

You can now complete the preparation by firming the soil down and raking the site to a fine, level tilth. Once this stage has been reached avoid walking on the soil. If you need access across the site use planks or boards to spread the weight.

### TURF

- ? Gives instant effect.
- ? Edges are well defined.
- ? No weeding while lawn establishes.
- ? Can be laid almost any time.

### Laying Turf

You can lay turf at any time but it is advisable to avoid heavy rain, frost and hot, dry spells. When you order your turf, ensure you are getting the type of grass that is

right for you (see above) and that it is coming from a reputable dealer - the cheapest option may be cheap for a reason!

If turf is kept damp, it can be stored for about three days after which it will turn yellow, so be sure to prepare your site in advance - see 'Preparing the Site' - and make sure stored turf is watered

Begin by laying the first row of turves along a straight edge, making sure each new turf lies tight against the last. Continue across the site, staggering the joints of each row with the previous row like bricks in a wall. Avoid standing directly on the soil or the turves by using boards to kneel and walk on. When the site is covered, use a light roller or press with the back of a rake to firm the turves down and create a good contact with the soil. To finish apply a light top dressing of sieved sandy loam then water in thoroughly. Continue watering if the weather is dry.

When the lawn is ready for mowing, set the blades to their highest setting and gradually lower them over subsequent cuts.

#### Tips

- ? Place the turves together so that the edges are slightly raised. This will prevent the turves pulling apart if shrinkage occurs.
- ? Create a clean edge by extending the turves beyond their final edge and trim to size afterwards.
- ? If you have to cut small pieces of turf to complete a line, prevent shrinkage by putting them in the middle of the row.
- ? Avoiding using the new lawn for as long as possible to allow the turves to establish.

#### SEED

- ? Relatively economical.
- ? No heavy, physical work.
- ? Better choice of seed mixes.
- ? Easy to store.

#### Sowing Seed

Seed can be sown either in mid spring or early autumn, when the ground is moist but not wet. Autumn is often better because the lawn has a chance to establish over autumn and winter when there is more water and less wear.

Once preparation is complete - see 'Preparing the Site' - calculate how much seed you will need, this will depend on the mixture - see above.

For large areas of ground it is a good idea to mark out a grid of squares with string and pegs. The squares can then be uniformly seeded and you can ensure an even coverage across the lawn. For the same reason you should use a pot or scoop to spread the seed and not your hand which will sow the seed unevenly. Broadcast the seed as evenly as you can first in one direction and then in another, i.e.; East - West, then North - South. Once the seed is on the ground rake the site

gently, so that the seed is just covered and water lightly. In the following weeks ensure that the site stays damp, you should see signs of germination within two weeks.

When the lawn is ready for mowing, set the blades at their highest setting and gradually lower them over subsequent cuts.

#### Tips

- ? To avoid the seed blowing away or clumping up, choose a dry, still day for sowing
- ? Avoid sowing too thickly as there is no benefit and extra cost.
- ? Keep birds away from newly sown seed.
  - Use seed treated with repellent.
  - Cover the area with chicken wire.
  - Suspend foil or other scarer over the site.
  - Attract the birds to another part of the garden.