

#bepesticidefree

a 10-step guide to a healthy lawn

1. Soil

To have a good lawn, one must have good topsoil. Most urban lots only have a thin layer of topsoil over compacted clay. If you want a good lawn, you will need at least 15 cm of topsoil. You can easily build it up and develop a beautiful healthy lawn. Just follow the steps below.

2. Rake

Early in the spring when your lawn is dry, you should power rake your lawn to remove old thatch, that layer of dead grass leaves. It is best to use a de-thatching rake, but any sturdy stiff rake will do. This is hard work but you only need to do it once a year. You can let a new layer of thatch build up over the summer. It will help conserve water and act as a barrier to weeds.



3. Aerate

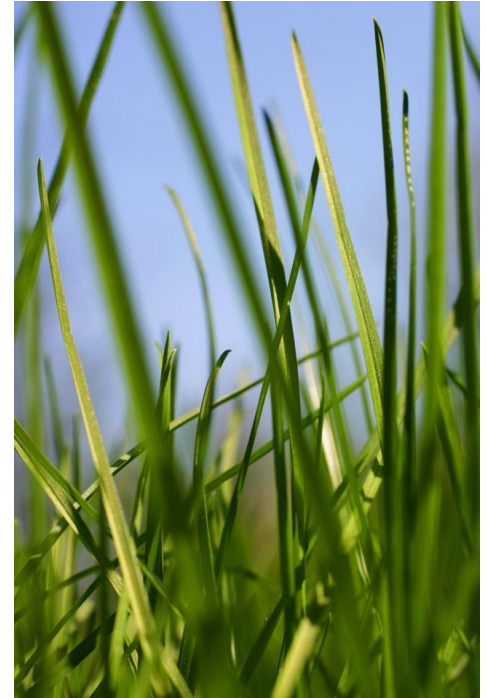
Each spring after de-thatching your lawn, you should aerate it. You can rent a machine or hire a service to cut these little soil plugs out of your lawn. Aeration allows oxygen to circulate, which improves soil structure by alleviating soil compaction. This allows water and nutrients to reach the roots.

4. Fertilize

After aeration, make up an organic top-dressing. Use equal parts aged manure, compost (or peat moss), and weed free topsoil. Shovel this mixture onto your lawn. Spread it around with a rake until it is about 1 cm thick. The blades of your existing lawn should be poking through. This step should be done between the middle of May and the middle of June.

5. Over-Seed

Grass plants, like all living things, eventually die. It is important to re-seed. Sprinkle grass seed by hand over the top dressing you have just applied. Use 500 grams of seed for every 20 square meters. Release it close to the ground so the wind doesn't blow it away. Be sure to use quality seed suited to our climate. Some varieties do better in the shade and some do better in the sun. This step should be done before mid-June.



Enjoy

A healthy lawn is a great place to relax and enjoy. Take pride in your lawn that was accomplished naturally.

Always Remember...

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!



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Problem Plants

Dandelions: Broad leaf plant with deeply toothed leaves, which forms bright beautiful yellow flowers.

Solutions: Pick the heads off before they go to seed and/or dig out the roots. To prevent dandelions from re-appearing aerate and over-seed the lawn. In sidewalk or driveway cracks, douse plants with boiling water or use a vinegar solution.

Creeping Charlie: A perennial plant with wide oval leaves and tiny lavender flowers. A good diagnostic technique is to pick some leaves, squish them and if they smell like mint it is creeping Charlie.

Solutions: Presence of Creeping Charlie indicates that the soil is low in nutrients. Prevention is the best cure. Over-seed lawn and use an organic fertilizer.

Chickweed: Small, oval leaves with pointed tips that occur in pairs and opposite each other on the stem. It has small white flowers.

Solutions: Pull by hand until the ground is exposed; aerate, use organic fertilizer and water. Re-seed the exposed area.

Fairy rings: The first sign of fairy rings may be a ring of mushrooms followed by rings of darker green grass with an inside border of dead grass. The fungus feeds on thatch, but is not toxic to grass.

Solutions: In order to prevent this problem, make sure to de-thatch your lawn each spring. If you have fairy rings, repeatedly spike with a garden fork just outside the ring, and then soak inside the ring with soapy water (1tsp of powder soap per 4 litres of water). Re-seed any dead areas.

6. Water

After seeding, you will need to water lightly daily (0.5 cm) for 2 or 3 weeks until the new grass plants become established. Then a heavy watering (2.5 cm) once or twice a week is best. Watering early in the morning or evening will help to reduce evaporation. This less frequent heavy watering will encourage deep root growth, giving you a healthier, more disease resistant, drought tolerant lawn that will be better able to compete with weeds.

7. Mow

Cut your lawn to between 5 and 10 cm long. It is best to use a mulching mower and leave the clippings on the lawn. This recycles the nutrients back into the soil. Most lawn mowers can be easily converted from a bagging mower to a mulching mower. Make sure your blades are sharp to help your grass remain healthy and strong.

8. Monitor

Monitor your lawn for insects, weeds, and diseases. The presences of a few weeds or insect pests is okay. A little manual weeding is very effective in limiting the spread of weeds. Try to remove as much of the weed and its roots as possible. Remove it before it goes to seed. If the problem gets worse, get more information. There are lots of low toxic solutions.

9. Plant for biodiversity

Increase the number of different kinds of plants in your yard. Try planting some native plants that will attract beneficial insects. Check with experts at local garden centres for advice on what native plants to plant. Pay attention to light, water, soil texture, and nutrient requirements.

10. Next Spring

After the snow melts, you will notice your lawn greens up earlier than in previous years, and it will be thicker and healthier. Repeat all these steps again but you can use less grass seed (about 500 grams per 36 square meters). Then you only need to repeat the top dressing and seeding steps once every 3 years.

To learn more about alternatives to using pesticides on your lawn, please see:

Book: How to Get Your Lawn Off Drugs
by Carole Rubin

Website:
www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/environnement-environnement/home-maison/lawn_healthy-saine_pelouse-eng.php



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