

Lawn maintenance (Spring)

After winter the lawn may be suffering from lack of attention, so it may be worth just lightly raking it to remove any debris, twigs etc. that may have collected over the winter. Ensure that there is no frost on the grass or if there is that you leave it until it has thawed. Walking on frost can damage the grass plant and will cause it to blacken, usually in the shape of unsightly great footprints across the garden.

Due to the fact that the grass has been left over winter, there could have been a fair amount of worm activity. This, combined with the actions of frost, may have caused the lawn to become a bit bobbly underfoot. If there are a lot of worm casts or mud/earth on the surface it is a good idea to brush or gently sweep the grass. This can be done with a normal 'Clean' broom or for larger gardens it is possible to get a brush attachment for some mowers that will brush as you cut, killing two birds with one stone. Any residual mud or earth should wash away in the rain.

Cut the grass, preferably on a higher cut than you would normally cut through the summer, so as not to shock the grass plants. This could weaken them, allowing disease to take hold and causing unsightly yellow patches. The grass would then benefit from being Spiked / Aerated; this can be done with a garden fork in small gardens or for large gardens use a mechanical spiker. It should be carried out in lines up or across the garden at regular intervals of 30-60cm (1-2 feet).

If you have a roller or a mower which has a roller attached, then while the soil is still moist and pliable give it a good roll. Ensure it is an even roll as it is possible to compact low areas even further and create more of a hollow than was there to start with.

If moss is a problem apply a Moss killer, possibly in the form of an environmentally friendly lawn sand. This will also help drainage of heavy or clay soils. After 10 days or so the moss should go black and it is then worth scarifying or raking out the dead moss. This will also remove thatch, which is the build up of dead matter at the base of the grass which can harbour disease and other infections.

For added benefit to the grass apply a feed / fertiliser, one that is not too high in Nitrogen but still has enough Nitrogen to promote good leaf growth and encourage strong root growth. There are some good fertilisers with an added 'Selective' Weed killer, (do not apply a 'Total' Weedkiller as this will kill the grass as well). Weeds will slowly die over a week to 10 day period and will usually be cut out when mowing. It may be necessary to apply a Selective Weedkiller on its own and it would be a good idea to scarify again to remove the weeds, especially if the infestation is quite heavy.

Top dressing with a soil or material that matches your existing garden soil will help to maintain the level of the lawn. This can be applied lightly over the lawn and brushed in with a broom, or the back of a rake. Then lightly over-seed with a desired seed mix- for gardens with high traffic a Rye Grass mix may be best and for ornamental lawns use a Fescue / Agrostis mix.

Repair any bare areas or areas of wear by lightly loosening the surface and applying topsoil and seed. For any chemical spills or animal urine problems it may be necessary to dig out some of the soil from the affected area and replace it prior to putting the seed on it.

Continue cutting throughout the summer, lowering the height of cut as the season progresses. Frequently Roll, Aerate and Scarify. Also increase the Nitrogen-based fertiliser to promote grass growth. Liquid iron is a good tonic and turf hardener. Be sure to irrigate if applying any chemicals in the summer or if rain is not forecast. Be careful not to over-water or flood the area.

Most Fertilisers will mainly contain Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium or identified on packages by their chemical symbols N:P:K. Nitrogen helps leaf and shoot production, Phosphorous helps stem and root growth and Potassium helps flowering processes.

Always follow the makers' instructions when using chemicals or other substances, and wear protective clothing and gloves.

Roses (Spring)

Take out suckers, crossing and weak growth and also prune out dead material. Lightly prune shoots to create an even shape- the desired shape may be that of a shuttlecock. Feed with a suitable fertiliser to encourage production of flowers, then regularly trim back and dead-head the roses and cut the flowers for displays or vases. This will promote further production of flowers giving two or three good crops throughout the season. Manure can be applied to rose beds to act as a mulch and as a slow release feed. Treat any disease such as black spot or rust.

Shrubs (Spring)

Rake off any remaining leaves from under the shrubs or from the shrub beds; remove any dead or damaged branches and unsightly growth. Taking into account when the shrub's flowering period is, gently prune and tidy the shrubs creating a desirable shape. Feed with an appropriate fertiliser and mulch the soil around the shrub to prevent water loss from the soil and to act as a slow release feed. Treat for any disease such as leaf curl.

Beds (Spring)

Again, tidy beds removing any twigs or debris from winter and trim any damaged or rotten growth. Cultivate the soil around the plants, remove weeds and check for any disease. Feed with a fertiliser to promote flower growth (Miracle-Gro or Phostrogen are good all-round feeds), edge the beds and irrigate as necessary through the summer. Change the bedding schemes and plants, if they are annual or ornamental beds.