



Riverview Garden Club Helpful Hints

September 2018

If you only fertilize your lawn once a year, fall is the time to do it. Your lawn could even take a light application of fertilizer in early fall and again in late fall.

As temperatures cool from the summer heat, your lawn will start growing faster and you'll need to mow weekly through the end of the season.

For a healthy lawn, it's a good idea to clean up fallen leaves. You can do this by taking several passes over your lawn with a mulching mower. You'll chop up the leaves into fine pieces so they decompose and add to your soil's structure.

Most grasses in the Northeast grow best in cool temperatures, making autumn the ideal time to seed. Seed your grass about a month before the first average frost date (mid-October for our area) so it can get established. You may want to aerate your lawn first before seeding to loosen compacted soil. When the area is seeded, keep the area moist for the first week or more after planting. As the grass is up and growing, keep it moist by watering a couple of times a day for short five-minute applications. Over time you can go to once a day watering for 10 to 15 minutes. It's important that the moisture be applied evenly so the seed doesn't wash away creating bare spots. When the grass is about three inches tall, start mowing to discourage weeds. Be sure the mower blade is sharp the first time you mow. A dull blade could rip the seedlings right out of the ground. Then mow as normal once the grass is the height you want it. For the health of your turf, don't cut off more than a third of the leaf length in any one mowing.

Over time soil tends to compact and become hard due to foot traffic, mowing, clay soil, or poor drainage. This prevents water, oxygen, and nutrients from reaching the roots. As a result, the turf becomes thin, pale, and patchy. Fall is a good time to aerate your lawn which is basically a process of making holes in the turf, breaking up hard soil so that water and nutrients penetrate more easily. After aerating, leave any soil plugs on the lawn as they will return nutrients as they decompose.

Final cleanup in the late fall will give your lawn a healthy look come spring.



--Sandy