



Featured Article

Lawn Aeration and Dethatching

As lawns age over time, soil compaction and thatch buildup can occur, reducing water absorption and blocking necessary oxygen and nutrients from reaching the plants' roots. When that happens, it becomes necessary to aerate and/or dethatch your lawn to improve moisture retention and restore its thick, green, healthy appearance.

Thatch is the accumulation of grass stems and roots, forming a barrier on the soil surface. Although thatch does have its benefits, when the thatch layer thickness exceeds ½" it should be removed. Dethatching can be done manually or mechanically and should be performed during cooler weather.

Removing thatch manually, using a garden rake, is very labor intensive and the end results are not the same as using a power rake or vertical mower. It is best to mow your lawn before starting. Dethatching lifts the thatch to the top of the lawn. When the job is completed, all of the thatch must be completely removed by hand raking. Plan on performing several treatments before your lawn is sufficiently dethatched.

Aeration is the process of removing small plugs of soil and thatch from your lawn – typically ½" round by 4" long – to allow air, moisture, and nutrients to penetrate down to the root zone. Although hand aerators are available, most aeration is done mechanically. Aeration should be performed at least once a year, preferably in the spring and again in the fall. The soil should be moist, but not wet. Aeration is often followed by a light top dressing of soil and grass seed.

Aerators and power dethatchers can be rented from most rental or garden centers. However, it is highly recommended that the work be performed by a qualified lawn or landscape maintenance contractor.