



Aylett Nurseries
The Complete Garden Centre

Creating & Maintaining A Lovely Lawn

Information Leaflet No. 30



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CREATING A LAWN

Generally a lawn can be made on any well drained site. The choice of whether to use turf or seed is entirely down to individual choice. Turf is easier to lay and faster to become established. Seed is easier to handle and there are different types of seeds ideal for specific situations and needs.

The best time of year for either of these methods is autumn or spring.

LAYING TURF

Please see our Turf Leaflet – No. 37 for purchasing and laying information.

PREPARATION

Ideally mark out and start preparing the lawn site at least two months before sowing seed or laying turf. Level the site and dig it over incorporating plenty of bulky organic matter and leave to settle for several weeks. Then, break it down with a fork, firm and rake it level. Ten days before sowing apply a General Purpose Fertilizer, at a rate of 70grams per Sq m/ 2oz per Sq yard.

SOWING SEED

Grass seed should be sown at the rate of 50g per square metre (1½ oz per square yard) or as instructed by the supplier packaging. For accurate sowing mark out the site into square metres using string or canes. Lightly rake the seed into the soil and it's a good idea to lay some twiggy branches over to keep the birds away. Do not allow the soil to dry out.

AFTER CARE

When the seedling grasses are about 5-7.5cm high, lightly firm the soil ideally using a garden roller or by carefully treading raised areas. Two days later you can carefully give a first cut. Ensure that the mower blades are really sharp. During September of the first year of your newly sown lawn apply a top dressing of sieved compost. There is no need to

feed a spring sown lawn in the first Autumn, but do feed the following spring.

LAWN MAINTENANCE

Spring Lawncare

With only a little time and effort, the condition of a lawn can be improved considerably. Follow our step by step guide to get your lawn looking good and give your whole garden a facelift.

Step 1 – Mow at the correct height

If you have a mower with adjustable cutting heights (ie a rotary or cylinder mower) keep the first few cuts of the season high to avoid putting the grass under stress. Gradually reduce the height of cut as the season progresses. When the grass is growing vigorously, cut once or twice a week and try to mow at right angles to the previous cut. Remove any debris from the lawn before cutting and trim edges after mowing. Re-define edges with a half moon edging iron for a really crisp, neat look. This only needs to be done once a year, but can really make a lawn look good if the edges have become a little indistinct.

Step 2 – Feed the lawn and control weeds and/or moss

In order to keep grass green and healthy it is important to apply a spring feed. Should weeds and/or moss be present, these may be tackled at the same time if you use a combined feed and weed and/or mosskiller. For medium to larger lawns it is easiest to use a granular product, as it is the quickest to apply over a larger area if you use a lawn spreader (ensure the lawn spreader is compatible with the product). When using a spreader, it is important to apply the product evenly – i.e. not to go over areas twice or overlap. Most granular lawn products need to be watered in if no rain falls within 48 hours of application – put the sprinkler on for about an hour to wash the feed down to the roots.

Liquid and soluble products are also available. Liquid weed and feeds are particularly good for very weedy lawns, as there is good contact with the weed leaves. Some lawn weedkiller products may be applied with a sprayer, which is not only far quicker than applying with a watering can, you also get the best contact with weed leaves, so weed control is more successful.

Both soluble and liquid lawn feeds give a rapid green up and, as they are applied with water, there is no need to water them in. The green up is usually shorter lived than that of granular products, but it is quick and easy to apply.

Step 3 – Scarify and aerate as appropriate

If you have applied a moss control product, it will be necessary to rake out the dead moss. Either use a spring tine rake with good downward pressure or a scarifier (useful for larger areas, as scarifying is hard work!) The lawn will look a bit of a mess immediately afterwards, but don't worry – it doesn't take long to recover and will benefit greatly from this treatment. Any areas which are compacted or which were heavily infested with moss will benefit from being spiked to a depth of about 6cm with a garden fork, at intervals of about 30cm. Brush in sharp sand to keep the holes open or apply a top dressing as suggested below.

Step 4 – Apply a top dressing

This is not absolutely essential, but it really does improve the health and appearance of a lawn. No self-respecting green keeper would fail to do this! You can buy ready mixed lawn dressing. All you have to do is to apply a good spadeful every square metre or so and brush it evenly over the lawn, working it into the holes if you have spiked the lawn.

Keeping your lawn looking good throughout the Summer

Mow frequently (once or twice a week) when the grass is growing vigorously. In dry weather mow less often (i.e. every 1-2 weeks) and raise the height of cut to avoid placing the grass under stress. It is better for the grass if you mow at right angles to the previous cut.

If the grass starts to look a little dull and lifeless, this is a sign that it is under stress through lack of water. Although the grass will recover from this, it does make it more prone to moss and weed infestation, so it is helpful to apply water in drier spells. Applying water thoroughly once or twice in dry spells is better than applying small amounts of water more frequently. Keep the sprinkler on for about an hour and water in the evening to minimise evaporation.

If you have time, it is also beneficial to lightly prick over the lawn surface with a garden fork beforehand to create channels for the water to go down. The autumn lawncare tips given overleaf will help to improve the drought resistance and vigour of the turf throughout the year. If the lawn needs a quick boost, then a top up feed may be applied. Soluble lawn feeds are likely to be the best bet at this time of year, unless there is plenty of moisture in the soil.

Autumn Lawncare

Doing just a few lawncare activities in the autumn will help to keep your lawn in great shape and get it off to a flying start the following year. Key tasks for the autumn are as follows:

Step 1 – Apply an Autumn Feed

Autumn lawn fertilisers differ from those applied in the spring in that the balance of nutrients encourages good root growth. This helps with drought resistance and vigour the following year. The autumn feeds also toughen up the top growth, making it better equipped to deal with the rigours of winter. Autumn feeds are available as either granular, liquid or soluble. Some also have a mosskiller incorporated, so choose one of these if moss is a problem on the lawn.

Granular feeds are best applied with a spreader and the grass should be dry at the time of application. If the weather is on the damp side, you may be better opting for a liquid or soluble feed, as it is fine to apply these to damp or wet grass. For larger areas of turf, choose a liquid that can be applied with a sprayer or a soluble powder that may be applied with a hose end dilutor rather than a watering can, as this will save you time.

Step 2 – Scarify/Rake out any treated moss

Autumn is the ideal time to scarify the lawn to remove thatch (a fibrous layer of dead grass and other debris that builds up over time). Scarifying will also remove any treated, dead (i.e. once it has turned black) moss. As previously covered, use either a spring tine rake with good downward pressure or an electric scarifier if there is a large area to treat.

Step 3 – Aerate the Lawn

The lawn is likely to be compacted after summer usage. If so, spike with either a garden fork or lawn aerator, as outlined in step 3 of the spring program, concentrating on the most compacted areas as a priority.

Step 4 – Overseed the Lawn

This is an excellent way to thicken and renew the lawn and really does give it a new lease of life. Essentially, it involves applying grass seed over an existing lawn and is a practice used by greenkeepers to keep football pitches, golf courses etc in good condition.

Firstly, lightly rake over the surface of the lawn with a spring tine rake (unless you have recently raked out treated lawn moss, in which case there is no need to do this). Then apply the grass seed – choose a type of grass seed that suits your lifestyle (check with the packs or a member of staff from the garden centre). The seed should be applied at a rate of about 20grammes per square metre (this is roughly a small handful over two square metres).

Step 5 – Apply a Top Dressing

This will help the grass seed to ‘take’ as well as giving all the other benefits outlined in the spring program. For details, see Step 4 in the spring lawncare program.

If you are interested in learning more about lawn care the Expert Book by Dr D G Hessayon is an excellent reference.

For information about specific products, please ask a member of staff in the garden centre.

**This leaflet is available
in alternative formats**

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