



Year-Round Gardening

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Getting Your Lawn Ready for Summer

Most of our Pikes Peak region lawns are cool season grasses. That means that the most active growth occurs when temperatures are between 60 and 75°F. Kentucky bluegrass, fescues and rye are all cool season grasses. These grasses benefit from some early spring care. Here are a few pointers toward a great lawn this year.

Core Aeration

Soil compaction is a big problem for turf. Healthy soil contains air pockets which allow plant roots to access oxygen. In other parts of the garden you can cultivate the soil annually to restore these air spaces. In a lawn that is not practical. You can address soil compaction in a lawn with core aeration. Core aeration is a process where 2-3 inch deep plugs are pulled out of the turf, usually by a powered core aerator. The plugs should be spaced at about 2" intervals. Aerators can be rented, or if you prefer there are many landscaping services that will aerate your turf for a modest fee. Water your lawn thoroughly one or two days prior to aeration. The plugs will be scattered across your lawn and you can leave them there to decompose, a process that will take a few days, or compost them. If you go over them with a lawn mower it will hasten the process, but may dull your mower blade. Core aeration can be done as soon as the ground is sufficiently thawed and the snow is gone.

Reseed

After aeration is a great time to reseed. The core "holes" make terrific space to germinate new seed. By reseeding with newer seed cultivars you may be able to gradually improve the quality of your turf. Look for seeds that are appropriate to your growing conditions. For more information on seed selection for Colorado lawns consult

<http://cmg.colostate.edu/gardennotes/561.pdf>.



Reseeding can be done once the ground is at least 45°F.

Fertilizing

Spring is a good time for a first application of fertilizer. The goal is to apply 1 pound of Nitrogen (N) per 1000 sq. ft. Using a spreader will ensure that your application is even and doesn't damage the lawn. For more details on fertilization and basic lawn care check out Colorado State University fact sheet 7.202 at

<https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/garden/07202.pdf>.

Weed control

Many fertilizers labeled for spring application, also contain pre-emergent weed controls. It is important to make a conscious decision about whether to use these products or not. If you are reseeding you definitely do not want to apply a pre-emergent weed control as it will prevent your grass seed from germinating. If you are going to apply a pre-emergent herbicide with the fertilizer make sure the application occurs by mid-April.

When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research-based answers. Get answers to your horticulture questions by visiting ask.extension.org any time day or night. Follow the El Paso County Master Gardeners on www.facebook.com/ColoradoMasterGardeners.EPC.