

Winterize your lawn

Our Indian Summer has been wonderful, but we all know it's just a matter of time until another bitter cold winter arrives.

Take a few moments now to care for your lawn and you will be rewarded with a thicker, stronger turf next year. Here's a quick summary of things to do:

Raking. Start by raking any heavy accumulations of leaves. A thin layer of leaves on the lawn can be mowed over, but if you can't see the grass blades after mowing, you need to rake the leaves. Otherwise the lawn could suffocate and suffer major disease problems next spring.

Fertilizing. Lawn grasses grow much of their root system in fall. A fertilization now will develop a root system that can better tolerate frigid temperatures in winter and drought next year. Anytime in October is okay, but the sooner the better. The lawn will use this fertilizer to strengthen



its roots until the ground freezes (sometime in November).

Some of the fall fertilizer will remain in the soil through winter and promote a quicker greening in spring.

Killing Weeds. Herbicides will continue to work as long as the weeds are actively growing. The weeds will suck up the herbicide and immediately send the chemicals down into their root systems. Now is the time to effectively kill dandelions, not next spring when the flowers appear. Death to the dandelions! Again, the sooner you do this, the better.

Mowing. Make sure your lawn is not lush during winter. When mowing for the last time, adjust your mower so that it cuts at 1.5 to 2.0 inches. To do this adjustment, place your mower on a hard, flat surface and measure from the blade to the surface.


A long, lush lawn is bad during the winter. It attracts mice and other critters. It gets matted down by snow and creates a moist environment that promotes disease problems.

Sowing Seed. The best time to sow grass seed is in early fall (August 15-September 20). We missed that opportunity.

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You can still "dormant seed" your lawn in late October or November. The seed will stay dormant through winter and then germinate in spring. Dormant seeding works best in flat, sheltered sites where soil will not wash away during the spring thaw.

If you dormant seed, do not use a crabgrass preventer next spring. The crabgrass herbicide will kill all germinating grass seedlings, including your desirable grass seedlings.

The Minnesota Vikings are terrible this year, so instead of getting depressed watching them lose again, spend next Sunday afternoon strengthening your lawn. 

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