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## Autumn Lawn Care Tasks With Tips

By James Kilkelly

Summer officially gives way to autumn on the 22nd of September, which is known as the autumnal equinox, but for the lawn owner autumn begins much earlier. This is because the green keeping tasks for autumn begin from the 1st day of September.

Your first task is to make changes to your mowing method, I would suggest raising the height of cut by 1cm above your summer mowing height which will give you an ultimate mowing height of 3cm (1 ¼ inches). The reason why you raise the cut to this height in autumn is to allow for the slowing of grass growth, on top of this I would usually mow just once a week once this growth begins to slow.

Should your lawns suffer from slow growth in the spring or during dry spells in the summer you may consider applying an autumn lawn feed to develop strong roots and hardiness. If you feel your lawn is not all it should be and would benefit from this autumn pampering then by all means apply the fertiliser but ensure it is specially formulated for autumn application, an autumn lawn feed such as this contains phosphates and potash whilst omitting nitrogen which would cause unwanted growth.

Many gardens may have goalmouths and beaten paths to washing lines that are tread-bare, sparsely populated by grass or compacted. Address these now to have them ship-shape for next season, start by driving the prongs of a garden fork approx 15cm (6 inches) into the compacted turf at various points throughout the affected area. This is a form of aeration, which allows more air to reach the grass plants roots on compacted soils.

To thicken up your grass sward in these high traffic areas we must introduce fresh seed, so firstly we must create a seedbed. Add a light layer of clean loamy topsoil (This is available bagged in most garden centres), rake this with a flat garden rake to the consistency of large cake crumbs and follow this by shaking on some lawn seed at a rate of 40 to 50g per square metre. Tamp down lightly with the flat of the rake to ensure firm seed-soil contact, alternatively on large areas use a light garden roller. Try to avoid mowing the reseeded area until next season, as most lawnmowers tend to unsettle the new seed due to their vacuum action.

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As well as being a good month for reseeding bare areas, September is also a good time to sow new lawn from seed, with many being sown over the early autumn weeks.

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offers you free access to an wealth of horticultural

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### **Fall Lawn Care**

**By Hans Dekker**

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I wish I had indulged my yard in a little tender-loving fall lawn care. Today I'm looking out my window at an all-too familiar Midwestern winter. Snow for Christmas and then a few days of warmth melted the insulating blanket away, leaving my lawn bare and susceptible to the terrors of an after-thaw ice storm.

It's easy in the warm spring to roll up our sleeves and get out the rakes, aerators, spreaders and mowers. After all, we can celebrate putting away the snow shovels and snow blower! However, although spring lawn care is important, a good fall lawn care program ensures that we'll have a lawn to tend when spring rolls around!

I could have started my fall lawn care with a final mowing. However, the grass seemed to quit growing... so I quit mowing. Silly me! A final mowing, lowering my mower blade about ½ inch would have helped me to easily implement the rest of my plan and prepared my lawn to face the perils of winter.

Before I knew it, my fall lawn care plan got soaked and blew away during a windy-rainy autumn. Top-dressing my lawn would have been a pain. The grass was too long for even finely ground compost to reach the soil and I just couldn't see myself shivering in the chilly autumn as I used the flat side of my garden rake to spread an eighth inch of it over my wet yard.

Our red maple, beautiful in autumn, is the last on our block to drop its leaves, so, I waited to rake. In the meantime, all the neighbors' leaves covered my lawn and wouldn't you know it? By the time the maple was bare, autumn rains were constant and cold. Fall lawn care was the last thing on my mind! Those half-decayed leaves are going to be a mess to clean up next spring, in addition to blocking out the first warm rays of sunshine and impeding the warm spring rains that my grass would certainly have enjoyed!

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So, this year our turf has to "weather the weather" and I'll spend my winter wondering if it will maintain the energy to raise it's blades to the sun after it pokes through that wet mess of leaves. However, I've got a sneaking suspicion that I'll be staring at brown patches until summer due to my abandoned fall lawn care plan.

Good thing it's a new year! I resolve to implement my fall lawn care plan next fall.

1. Cut my lawn one last time when I notice it's stopped growing.
2. Top-dress my grass with a thin layer of compost, not to keep it warm (I'm not that silly!), but to add one last batch of nutrients to the soil!
3. Spade compost into bare spots and reseed them to give them a head start on spring growth.
4. Rake autumn leaves to maximize my grass's chance at getting its share of warm spring rains and sunshine.

Hans is the owner and one of the editors of

Lawn Mower Guide a Collection of Articles about Lawn

Mowers and Lawn Care



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