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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!

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 Care FAQ

By Michele Oberton

Q: How often should I cut my lawn? **A:** As part of quality lawn care, regular cutting with a mower should be observed and the grass should be cut to an even height. Cutting your lawn once per week should be sufficient.

Q: What is the purpose of raking my lawn? **A:** This is commonly done in order to remove dead grass. Many people only rake their lawn in the fall as the leaves begin to cover their yard, but a part of effective lawn care requires that lawns be raked during other seasons as well.

Q: Does lawn care require that I water my lawn? **A:** Not everyone does this, but it is recommended that lawns be watered in order to avoid having the grass to dry up and turn brown. If this happens, you could be left with brown spots in your yard.

Q: I have a dog and he is reeking havoc on the yard. How can I replant my lawn with success? **A:** Dogs and lawn care are not the best match, but they can work together. When you replant your lawn, consider using seeds that are specifically designed for high traffic areas. Other factors that may worsen the effect that your dog is having on the lawn may include a chain dragging the grass and exposing the dirt surface below or if your dog is prone to digging.

Q: Should I use harsh chemicals on my lawn in order to rid it of pests and insects? **A:** Many experts agree that this is a bad idea for several reasons. If you have children who play in the yard, this may be unhealthy for them. The same is true of pets, who make it a habit of digging or even eating grass at times. In addition, harsh chemicals often do more harm than good to your lawn and are certainly no friend of the environment. Instead, try a bug light or other means of ridding your lawn of insects and other pests.

Lawn care is a very big industry, which services millions of people every year. Whether you do not have the time to care for the lawn yourself or simply aren't up to the task, there are a number of

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landscaping experts that are readily available to help with lawn care needs. These are commonly found in the yellow pages under 'Landscaping' and most businesses can provide you with an instant quote over the telephone if you have detailed information regarding your specific lawn care needs.

For more information about lawn care, click the link to visit our website at

. We have some great free articles and resources about lawn care.



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