

AERATION



The Hero Your Lawn Needs

The Importance of Aeration

Have you ever had a lawn disease? Have you heard that run-off is bad? Is your lawn not as thick as you would like it to be? Have you ever had a difficult time pushing a shovel or a sprinkler into your lawn? Have you ever been told to “dethatch” your lawn? Or that you should be putting down “Bugs in a Jug” to help improve the biological activity in the soil?

Did you know that aerating your lawn regularly will dramatically reduce all of those problems at the same time?

Aeration is considered an essential ‘green’ lawn practice because it reduces run off from your lawn, keeping nutrients in the soil, and minimizes soil erosion and wash outs. In a recent research out of the University of Minnesota, researchers conclude that “aeration promotes better moisture and air penetration into compacted soils, [which] helps to establish a deeper and healthier root system and also stimulates the microbial activity involved in decomposing the thatch layer.” **To summarize, aeration is a win-win-win-win lawn solution.**

Aeration Benefits

- Improves healthy microbial activity in the soil
- Reduces run off
- Decreases need for synthetic fertilizers and increases rain absorption
- Increases disease resistance
- Thickens your lawn
- Decreases thatch faster
- Creates organic matter faster



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 Blue Grass Enterprises, Inc.

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How Do I Know if My Lawn is Compacted?

Is there a thick layer of thatch in areas of your lawn that seems to be killing the grass? Is your lawn thinner than you would like? Can you barely drive a shovel into the ground in these areas? Have you had to treat your lawn for diseases? Good news, you have compacted soils and this is a relatively easy fix.

Why Dethatching Isn't the Answer

Thatch is actually a normal and healthy part of your lawn's life cycle. Over time, and with the help of microbes, water, oxygen and sun, thatch will breakdown into much needed food good bugs in your soil, who in turn, turn the thatch into organic matter for your plants, thus enriching the soil. People who dethatch are often trying to "thicken" their lawn... But unfortunately, there are simply removing a symptom of an unhealthy lawn, rather than treating a problem.

The Importance of Aeration

A thriving lawn maintenance line-up includes core aeration. If you have seen a lawn covered in small dirt plugs and full of tiny holes, then you have seen the aftermath of a core aeration. Believe it or not, this (temporary) unsightly practice is full of positive possibilities when it comes to soil and plant health. Aeration promotes better moisture and air penetration into compacted soils, [which] helps to establish a deeper and healthier root system and also stimulates the microbial activity involved in decomposing the thatch layer." By improving oxygen circulation in the soil biosphere, you increase native microbial activity which, in turn, breaks down clippings faster, improving the organic matter content of your top soil. No "bugs in a jug" necessary.

How Do I Aerate?

Check with local hardware stores to see if they rent out core aerators to customers. Many local lawn companies offer aeration services; be sure to ask for a core aeration in a 3" x 3" pattern. Ideally, the plugs that the machine pulls should be 3" in length, *but if your lawn has serious compaction issues it may take a few treatments to achieve these results*. In heavily compacted lawns (e.g. new construction or neglected lawns), you should aerate at least two times a year to help alleviate compaction. Once your lawn is thriving again, you can reduce frequency to once a year. *Note: Applying a starter fertilizer to your lawn approximately one week prior to aeration will speed and improve recovery results.*

When Do I Aerate?

Studies out of Iowa State suggest that there really isn't a *bad* time of year to aerate, as long as you avoid stressful weather patterns such as drought and extreme heat. If you are trying to correct a problem, you should try to aerate as soon as possible. For routine maintenance we recommend incorporating aeration into your fall routine because you will be least likely to introduce weeds to the site. Aerate one week after applying a starter fertilizer, and, if possible, after some good rains so the ground is as soft as possible.

“De-thatching is a last resort. The best thatch control happens with good mowing, intelligent feeding practices, and with routine aeration.

- MIKE LOAN, OWNER,
BLUE GRASS ENTERPRISES



Pro Tip from Blue Grass Staff:

Applying a starter fertilizer before aerating is very important. Think of it like a doctor who wants a patient to be as healthy as possible before surgery. Give your lawn a starter fertilizer a week before to prepare for the stress of aeration. Recovery will be noticeably faster.

What Else Can I Do to Reduce Thatch or Thicken My Lawn?

Aerating and proper feedings will improve the soil quality in your lawn and the health of your plants. If you have heavy clay soils, applying gypsum will help to break up clay to improve drainage and air flow.

Soil sampling is always recommended to ensure you are providing the correct nutrients to your soils. Read more about soil testing at <http://www.bgsod.com/soil-sampling>. The staff at Blue Grass will interpret the tests and make recommendations for a feeding program to get your lawn in top form.

