

Lawn Maintenance

Dethatch (early Spring)

Thatch is a layer of living and dead grass leaves, roots and stems that occurs at the soil surface. This is where soil bacteria and other organisms break down the grass and return nutrients to the soil so they can be recycled by the lawn. A little bit of thatch ($\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch) is good. Excessive thatch is a major problem in Alaska lawns. When thatch becomes excessive, it can prevent water, nutrients and air from penetrating the soil.

- **See Don Abel Rentals for dethatcher rentals**

Kill moss (as needed)

Moss is a major problem throughout Southeast Alaska lawns. In order to prevent moss from taking over a lawn, it is important to create conditions that favor the grass rather than the moss. Good drainage, proper fertilization, adequate light, proper pH, and reduced soil compaction all contribute to establishing a healthy lawn that resists moss growth. The only way moss killers will be effective long-term is by maintaining the prescribed lawn-favoring conditions.

Apply lime (1x per year)

A soil test is required to determine the pH level of your soil. Most, though not all, soils will be on the acidic side of the scale. If they are too acidic, the pH will need to be raised using lime. Pelletized lime distributed with a rotary fertilizer spreader is usually more convenient and less messy to apply than powdered lime. Agricultural lime will supply calcium to your lawn while dolomitic lime supplies calcium and magnesium. Don't use hydrated, or "builders," lime since that material is caustic.

Aerate (every other year)

Aeration is one of the most overlooked, yet beneficial, lawn management techniques. The benefits of aeration are many:

- It allows air and water penetration into the soil.
- It reduces soil compaction.
- It increases fertilizer and lime penetration into the soil.
- It encourages root growth.
- It reduces thatch.

One method of aeration involves driving solid spikes through the grass and turf and into the soil, leaving tiny holes in the turf. A more effective and recommended method is renting a core aerator, which actually removes small plugs of turf and soil leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch diameter holes behind in the turf. These holes provide access to the soil below when adding amendments such as sand and nutrients.

- **See Don Abel Rentals for core aerator rentals**

Fertilize (2-4x per year)

Any established lawn will need some fertilization. At a minimum, a homeowner should apply fertilizer in the spring and again in late summer. For a premium lawn, follow the following schedule:

Late May: Apply lawn starter fertilizer

Late June: Apply high Nitrogen lawn fertilizer

Late July: Apply high Nitrogen lawn fertilizer

Late August/beginning of September: Apply lawn winterizer or 8-32-16

Water

One of the most common problems with lawn care is overwatering. Most lawns need about 1" of water per week. Frequent, light watering causes the grass to develop a weak, shallow root system. For best results, water deeply and less often.