



1 2 M O N T H S
O F
L A W N C A R E

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LAWNCARE CALENDAR

January

Get the year off to a good start by servicing your lawnmower. Unless we're treated to some very mild weather, you won't need your mower for a few weeks so take the opportunity to make sure it's in tip-top condition. Number 1 priority is to clean and sharpen those blades.

Servicing your lawnmower is a productive way to while away the hours in the winter. Don't forget to sharpen the blades!

Staying on the subject of maintenance – your lawn edging tools would probably benefit from a little bit of TLC too.

Sharpening the blades and oiling any joints will make them much easier to use.

If you're not mechanically minded, most garden machinery dealers have experts on hand to service your mower for you.

Now is the time to undertake any lawn repairs for early spring. If you need help with aerating or scarifying, talk to your lawn care professional and get booked in before the rush.



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February

In mild weather, there's no reason why you can't do a bit of hollow-tine aeration in January. It will certainly help with drainage.

Use your judgement though – some jobs are best left until the soil warms up a little.

Keep toys and debris off the lawn as much as possible and definitely don't walk on it if it's white with frost.

As the weather warms up its time to get ready to make any repairs. Provided the ground isn't frozen, it's OK to lay new turf in February. You can also order new supplies like spring/summer lawn feed and grass seed.

Towards the end of the month, you may be able to give your lawn a light trim with the lawnmower. Don't go too mad at this stage.



THE WORK YOU DO IN THE SPRING WILL PAY DIVIDENDS IN THE SUMMER

You could trim and shape the edges too. You'd be amazed at the difference it makes to the whole garden.

After the winter we've just had, one of your first jobs this spring should be feeding your lawn. Here's what to feed and why.

The grass can be a rather sickly shade of yellow. The growth can be uneven, and the edges are raggedy.

Winter is hard on lawns in general.

A spring lawn feed is essential after the winter. It will put the colour and the vigour back into the lawn and make the whole garden look so much more alive.

From the plants' point of view, they're a bit shocked and they need some TLC. What do we do with people and pets that are suffering from shock? We make sure they get some really good nourishing food to help every cell in their body recover and rejuvenate. Obviously, Heinz Tomato Soup is not suitable for your lawn – so what is? What should you be feeding your lawn this spring?

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February

I'm hoping that the weather has finally turned and we're going to see some warmer days. Longer daylight hours plus higher soil temperatures plus plenty of soil moisture will mean rapid growth on your lawn.

Not just the grass blades but the roots too. Now before you put your head in your hands and groan at the prospect of more mowing, just think how good your lawn will look

once it's shed its winter jacket.

To support healthy growth, your lawn needs three major "food" groups.

Nitrogen molecules are an important part of proteins. In a plant, proteins are super-important. And there are lots of different types. Some are vital for the structure of the plant – they make the cells of roots and leaves so that the plant can harvest nutrients from the air and the soil



TO SUPPORT HEALTHY GROWTH, YOUR LAWN NEEDS THREE MAJOR "FOOD" GROUPS.

Proteins also make the growth hormones that make leaves grow up and roots grow down. If the plant lacks nitrogen it will be pale, floppy and prone to disease.

Phosphorus

Lack of phosphorus is one of the biggest limiting factors to plant productivity. It is used by the plant to make DNA (remember each plant cell has DNA it), it is an important part of the cell walls.

It also gets used for general metabolism, photosynthesis and respiration. You're probably more familiar with phosphorus as a major component of tomato feed. It's vital for flowering, fruiting and root growth.

Potassium, Nitrogen and Phosphorus become part of the plant structure – they're like building blocks

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February

Potassium though has a different role. Potassium controls many of the chemical reactions within a plant that decide how it reacts to its surroundings and how it grows. I suppose an analogy would be the oil in a car engine. It's not part of the car but without it, you'd be in a big muddle.

Every plant leaf has little tiny holes in its surface called stomata.

The stomata allow the leaves to breathe but they also let water escape from the leaves in hot weather.

Normally, the plant can close its stomata to prevent wilting. Without potassium, the stomata react very slowly and so the plant suffers in dry weather. Plants also need plenty of potassium in the roots so that they can draw water in from the soil. Again – lack of potassium leads to dehydration.



SCARIFY IN SPRING TO GET RID OF THE DETRITUS THAT SLOWS NUTRIENT ABSORPTION

When you are choosing a lawn feed for spring and summer use, you must be sure that it contains all three of those components.

Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium. You may see them written as NPK - to get the very best value from your lawn feed.

To make sure that every granule of your lawn feed gets taken up by your lawn I strongly advise you scarify and aerate your lawn in early spring.

That means that the lawn feed can easily be taken down to the roots where it is needed.

Scarifying your lawn in spring will get rid of the detritus that slows nutrient absorption. I wouldn't recommend using a rake though – not unless you have a very small lawn or a lot of spare time. Either hire a scarifying machine or ask a specialist lawn care company for help.

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Apply your lawn feed exactly as the manufacturer suggests and don't forget the follow-up feed – usually 8-10 weeks after the first application.

Granular lawn feeds like Harrowden Turf's Vivid Green Spring Summer Feed, must be watered in. If not, there is a risk of the grass blades being scorched. I always wait until it looks like rain before I put my lawn feed on – that way Mother Nature usually waters it in for me. If your time is not as flexible as mine, use a hosepipe or sprinkler.

March:

Mowing starts in earnest this month. Growth will begin to speed up so apply a spring/summer feed early in the month to make sure the plants have enough nutrients to support them. Follow the manufacturers' instructions and make a note on the calendar of when the next feed is due.

It is possible to scarify your lawn using a sprint-tine rake. However, it's much gentler on the lawn and your body if you use a machine.

This is a good time to treat moss in your lawn. Even the smallest amount of moss will spread if conditions are right so scarifying to remove plants and then use a moss treatment to deal with spores. Your lawn might look a bit battered for a couple of weeks after scarification but come summer you will definitely reap the benefits.

How to scarify your lawn.

There is still a chance of frost at this time of year, so keep those mower blades high and just tickle the top of the lawn every 7-10 days. Nipping off the tips of the grass blades will encourage thicker more luxuriant growth.

Treat weeds as soon as you see them. Hopefully, you'll be able to spot-treat them, that way you can minimise chemical usage. If your lawn is very weedy, call in the experts. They have access to treatments that are more effective and less damaging to the environment than some of the things you find on the garden centre shelves.

April:

You will most likely be needing to mow at least once a week. Keep those mower blades sharp and don't remove more than 1/3 of the growth at a time. Using a proper fertiliser spreader ensures you don't get stripes and bare patches due to uneven fertiliser application.

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May

If you've not yet applied a spring/summer feed, do it now. Do the same for weed treatments if you need them. Late spring temperatures are ideal for overseeding any thin or bare patches.

May:

Gradually reduce the height of your mowing blades. For a utility lawn, aim for a height of about 2.5cm. By now, the plants will have taken up most of the feed you applied in March.

Check the manufacturers' recommendations and reapply if necessary.

Keep an eye out for weeds and treat with a selective herbicide if necessary. Don't forget to trim the edges of your lawn regularly.

June

Hopefully, you'll be getting plenty of usage from your lawn. Remember to keep moving furniture, toys, rugs etc around so that they don't damage the grass.



LETTING THE GRASS GROW LONG AND THEN SCALPING IT IS A RECIPE FOR DISEASE

Keep on with the mowing and remember to do it little and often. Letting the grass grow long and then scalping it is a recipe for disease and disaster.

If your lawn is due a feed, try to apply fertiliser just before the rain. It's important that the granules are watered in otherwise they will scorch the grass.

No rain? Unroll your hosepipe and just dampen the lawn enough to dissolve the fertiliser particles.

July:

Dry soil and lack of rainfall might mean that your lawn starts to lose its colour. For an established lawn that's OK. Don't worry about it, nature knows how to manage these things. For a young lawn though, especially a newly turfed one, drought is bad. Use your common sense and water it sensibly.

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July

Did you know that April 2017 was the 10th driest April on record? According to the Environment Agency, in England, rainfall in April ranged from just 19% of average in the South East to 44% in the South-West. Edinburgh was the driest place in the UK.

What could happen if drought hits the UK?

Drought affects our everyday lives in many ways. We need water for domestic use, for drinking and for hygiene

We're all of us very aware of that – even if we do take it for granted. We also use water in food production, manufacturing and energy production. Without enough water, farmers' crops will fail. That will most likely lead to higher prices in the shops.

Don't forget our wildlife and waterways too. An awful lot of wildlife depends on our rivers, streams and drainage ditches.

Animals and plants suffer when water levels drop.



DROUGHT AFFECTS OUR LIVES - WE NEED WATER FOR DOMESTIC USE, DRINKING AND HYGIENE

What can gardeners do to avoid drought happening? Waterwise is the leading authority on water efficiency.

They say that all of us should be thinking about saving water all of the time.

For example, spending one minute less in the shower could save up to 16 litres of water. For a family of 4, that's a saving 24,000 litres a year or £100.

Sedum matting makes a great alternative lawn. It's not as hardwearing as grass but it is drought tolerant and butterflies adore it.

Gardeners can save water by choosing drought tolerant plants whenever possible. By installing water butts to collect rainwater from roofs and by only watering when absolutely necessary.

There's certainly no need to water established lawns. Especially if your lawncare regime considers the possibility of drought.

Newly laid turf must be watered daily until it's established – there's no getting away from that.

However, if you use a hosepipe rather than a sprinkler, you're less likely to over-water.

Watering late in the evening, as the sun goes down, reduces the amount of water that will be lost to evaporation. Most of the water will be able to sink down to where the roots need it.

Established lawns really don't need watering. I know it's lovely to see a lush green lawn on a hot summer day. But honestly, the plants are happiest in hot weather when they're allowed to do their own thing. They naturally slow down growth and become partially dormant.

If your lawn is maintained at a slightly longer length when drought is threatened, it will stay greener for longer. A 6mm lawn will really struggle in a drought situation. A 25mm lawn will have enough grass to shade the soil and longer stronger roots that can seek out water from deep in the soil.

How should gardeners cope with drought?

There are a number of measures that sensible gardeners can take to help their plants thrive during a drought.

Mulch

Mulching with bark or compost will help conserve soil moisture and reduce the need for watering.

Water conservatively

If plants MUST be watered – and I'm talking here about edibles not ornamentals – use a watering can rather than a hosepipe and water in the evening time. Cut the bottom off plastic bottles, take off the lid and then upend them in the soil beside each of my tomato plants. Use them to direct water to the roots so that not a drop gets wasted.

Waterwise plant choices

When buying plants, choose the ones that are truly suited to your soil type and garden aspect.

They need a lot less TLC to survive. Sedums are great in a sunny garden and sedum matting makes great ground cover for hot dry areas.



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Waterwise - August

Waterwise lawncare regime

Aerate, scarify and feed lawns in early spring so

that they can form strong root systems to help them withstand drought. Continue to feed every 6-8 weeks during the growing season. Mow lawns little and often but don't let the grass get too short. Use water retaining gel or granules in the soil – particularly in planters and hanging baskets.

Wildlife and ponds

Try to help wildlife if you can – a shallow tray of water placed in the shade will give birds, bees, butterflies and other beneficial creatures a much-needed drink on a hot day.

If you have a pond in your garden, plant waterlilies or other aquatic plants to shade the surface and reduce evaporation. Only use the fountain at night – again this will reduce evaporation and cut down the need to top up the pond with water.

Make the most of the weather – whatever it may be Most importantly whatever the weather, enjoy your garden for what it is and embrace what nature has to throw at it.

August

The summer school holidays mean extra wear and tear on your lawn. Keep moving toys, tents and furniture so that they don't leave weak or discoloured patches on the lawn.

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September

High summer and growth will most likely slow down for a while. Lift the mower blades a little if you can. Longer grass copes better with drought and with all the wear and tear from parties and barbecues.

September

Weather permitting your grass will start to green up a little. This is a good time to scarify especially if there is moss present. Scarification clears dead grass and debris from the base of the plants and allows water to filter through the sward into the soil.

Hollow tine aeration helps get oxygen to the roots and aids drainage

Hollow tine aeration will also help with winter drainage. Keep an eye on the weather forecast though. Newly aerated lawns are prone to drying out so if there's the talk of an Indian summer, delay aeration for a while. Switch to your winter-feeding regime. That means changing the formulation of the feed to one with very little nitrogen and lots of phosphorus and potassium. In autumn and winter, you need to support root growth and discourage leaf growth.

How to aerate your lawn. Be vigilant in looking for signs of disease. Treat any weeds you spot – as autumn draws on chemical treatments will work slower so best to tackle things now if you can.



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October

October

Time to bring that springtime rake out of the shed and get some exercise. Fallen leaves must never be left on the lawn for more than a couple of days. They block the light and damage the grass.

Raking leaves burns around 120-150 calories for half an hour. So, it's well worth the effort.

Expect to mow a couple of times in October. Cheat a bit and use the lawnmower with the grass box on it to pick up autumn leaves.

November

All is quiet on the lawncare front. It's not too late for aerating and it's certainly not too late to apply winter feed if you haven't done it yet.

Keep off the lawn when the grass is frozen.

Remember to take all the summer toys, furniture and paraphernalia off the lawn.

You may or may not need to mow. Use your judgement.

If you do mow, the blades must be really sharp.



This is not the time of year to risk tearing at the leaves, if you can't offer a clean cut, don't do it at all.

December

Where are your priorities going to lie this month?

Good lawn care that will last till next spring or Christmassy ornaments?

Why not compromise and decorate the edges of the lawn rather than standing ornaments on the grass where they can damage the plants?

This is the time of year to reflect and plan.

What worked well this year? What did you not manage to do? Next year, do you need to employ the services of one of the many lawn care professionals who can scarify, aerate, feed, weed and trim while you get on with the things you enjoy?