

Lawn Repair in Spring

Lawns often develop sparse or bare areas that detract from the lawn's appearance and contribute to erosion. Before repairing, correct major reasons for lawn problems.

Include pruning trees and shrubs to allow more sunlight to reach the ground or using an aerifier to improve soil compaction.

As snow melts in the spring, damage from a mouse-like animal known as a meadow vole may be present. Damage appears as thin (1-2 inches) twisting, curling ridges of tightly packed grass blades over the lawn surface. Usually the crown or growing point is not damaged and natural recovery occurs after grass begins growth. If it's chewed off at the ground and the crown destroyed, reseeding is necessary.

TIMING

Spring seeding should be done as early as possible. However, allow your soil to dry somewhat before preparing it for seeding. This avoids unnecessary damage to soil structure. If you're doing the seeding yourself, briskly rake or use a power rake, also known as a vertical mower to lightly scratch the soil surface. If the entire area is dead grass, set the power rake slightly deeper. Power rakes are also known as dethatching machines or vertical mowers. A loose, 1/4 inch of surface soil is necessary to incorporate seed into the surface and ensure good seed and soil contact.

SEEDING TECHNIQUES

- Where some grass exists, overseed at a rate of about 1 to 2 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Where you are essentially starting over, seed at a rate of 3 to 4 pounds per 1,000 feet. Consider reworking or adding topsoil if this is the case.
- Seeding can be accomplished by hand spreading it in small areas, or by using a fertilizer spreader in large areas.
- Once spread, lightly rake it into the surface such that 5-10% of the seed is visible. Provide 1/2 inch of water to settle the seed into the soil.
- Keep the soil surface evenly damp, but not soggy, for the next 3-4 weeks or until the lawn begins to get established.
- Keep your lawn mower set lower for the first 3-4 weeks after seeding. This will allow light to the soil so the new seeds can germinate and get established.
- Lightly mulching with peat moss or leaf compost conserves surface soil moisture. The soil surface should be slightly visible after mulch has been applied.
- As the lawn continues to mature, water for longer periods at a time but allow more time between waterings. Begin mowing when the new grass is about 1 1/2 to 3 inches tall.

While spring lawn seeding is a possibility, mid-August to mid-September seeding is usually more successful. Competition from annual weeds is also less of a problem.