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Do You Have Tips On Early Spring Lawn And Yard Care?

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A weekly question/answer column

**Do You Have Tips On Early Spring Lawn
And Yard Care?**

Jerry Goodspeed answers:*

In early spring, you can reduce the tangle of weeds that appear in your yard, reduce garden pests and help your lawn become healthy and green. Proper care of your lawn in the spring will help promote healthy, green grass throughout the year. Consider these tips.

- Core aeration, where small plugs are removed from the soil, has proven to be more beneficial to turf than power raking, which was a common yard care technique several years ago. Aerating allows for better air, water and fertilizer penetration into the soil. It also helps reduce the thatch layer and minimizes compaction that produces unhealthy roots. It can be done any time the ground is free from snow. Heavily used areas and clay soils may need to be aerated twice a year, once in the spring and again in the fall. Normal soil types and use areas are usually fine with one aeration in the spring, and sandy soils only need it every two years.
- If a fall fertilizer was applied last year, the grass may not need it again until mid-or late-May. If there was no fall application, a fertilizer high in nitrogen can be applied now. Consider using a slow release fertilizer, such as sulfur coated urea. These fertilizers are more expensive, but only need to be applied every two to three months to keep the lawn looking green and lush.
- You can begin mowing your grass as soon as the lawn starts to grow. Leave grass between 2 1/2 to 3 inches tall once you start mowing. You should begin watering when the lawn looks dry or begins to show early symptoms of water stress.
- Weeds, such as spurge, crabgrass and foxtail, are common in July and August and should be controlled in the spring since they are nearly impossible to remove midsummer.
- Weeds germinate and are small in the spring so they go unnoticed. Nip them in the bud by applying a preemergent such as Galleria, Halt or Dacthal to the lawn now and then again in early June. These products must be applied before the weeds begin to germinate since they kill the young germinating annuals, not the weeds (or lawn) once they are established.
- Cleaning up debris around the yard and garden will help keep pests under control. They love to hide under old dead plant material and organic matter. Controlling the first generation of most insects greatly reduces their number throughout the summer. A clean garden eliminates a breeding area or a place for insects to gather.
- Control broadleaf weeds in early May with a broadleaf weed killer. These weeds include dandelions, clover, black medic and chickweed. They need to be treated before the weather warms to above 85 degrees.

* Jerry Goodspeed is Utah State University Extension Horticulturist