

Welcome to my weekly series!



Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

ask the landscape professional

SEND ME YOUR QUESTIONS ... I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest. **Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335**

Linda's Question of this Week:

In last week's Ask The Landscape Professional, you said that "As part of good lawn turf management practices, we are coming up on the time of year you should be soil testing, aerating, overseeding and dethatching (if necessary)." Why is that?

Linda's Answer:

Why Soil Test? Nothing should go onto (or into) your lawn unless you do a soil test first. I recommend that you soil test every year. Frequently, people routinely add lime to their lawns every fall, because that's what they've always done and they believe they are doing a good thing. Nothing could be further from the truth. Soil testing is a must to tell you: 1) If you need lime at all, 2) What type of lime you need (there are two types), and 3) How much you need to apply.

Lime is used to raise the pH of your soil (pH is a measure of soil acidity). To thrive, grass needs a pH between 6.5 to 6.8; if your soil is outside that range, weeds will be abundant and your grass will struggle. If you add lime and your soil doesn't need it, you will push the pH too high which is equally bad and tough to lower.

There are two types of lime: dolomitic and calcitic; dolomitic has both calcium and magnesium, and calcitic is mostly calcium. Depending on what your soil needs, one will be more appropriate than the other.

Soil tests will define lime application requirements in pounds per 1000ft². Do not follow whatever the lime bag says; go by what your soil test calls for and don't put down extra. It takes lime months to have an effect on soil pH, and even then we usually only see an improvement of +0.1 to 0.5 pH per year. If your pH is low by several points, you are in for several years of liming. Even so, I recommend soil testing every year to see where you are.

When we interpret soil test results, in addition to pH, there are a number of other parameters that we evaluate to understand the overall picture of what is happening in your lawn so we can recommend the appropriate corrective actions.

Next week, I'll write about why you need to aerate, over-seed and possibly dethatch this time of year.

If you need help with soil testing and analysis, give us a call. We take multiple soil samples of your lawn, have the results tested by a renowned national laboratory, and provide you with our analysis and interpretation of soil test results. We do not leave you with confusing raw data. We put the results and our analysis in plain English, give you a written, easy to understand report and help you put together a turf management strategy for your lawn. Give us a call if we can be of service.

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Linda K. Lillie is the President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc, the premier landscape tree care & lawn care company in SE Connecticut for the last 18 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation work.

860-235-0752

www.sprigsandtwigs.net



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