

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

Question of the Week:

In Ask The Landscape Professional two weeks ago, 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, over-seeding and dethatching (if necessary)." Why is that?

Linda's Answer:

Last week I wrote about soil testing, so this week I'll talk about why you need to aerate, overseed and dethatch.

Aeration is an important turf management practice that should be done at least once a year in the fall or spring. Basically, it is a mechanical process that pulls plugs out of your lawn creating a pathway for water, fertilizer and air to reach the root zone of grass plants.

Aeration is the primary technique used to deal with soil compaction issues. When you have compacted soil, you will have poor grass growth and an abundance of broad-leaved weeds such as plantains. If your lawn has high traffic areas from people, pets or vehicles, you can bet it is compacted and should be aerated. If your lawn struggles and browns in hot weather or has standing water after a rainstorm, aeration is in order. Aeration is a great help in dealing with thatch build-up, which is a thick layer of organic matter near the surface of the lawn. Thatch is most common in heavily chemically fertilized Bluegrass lawns.

There are several types of aerating machines that can be used. The best type of aeration machine pulls plugs from the lawn and leaves $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter holes several inches apart and several inches deep in the lawn. The removed soil plugs are left on the surface to decompose or be distributed the next time the lawn is mowed. Spike aerators can be used, although I believe they are completely ineffective and actually create more compaction near where the spikes drive into the soil. Aeration is something that homeowners can do themselves by renting machines for a few hours from a local rental facility. Make sure you make multiple passes in different directions across your lawn.

No matter how strong your lawn is, a certain number of grass plants will die each year and need to be replenished. This is done by a process called overseeding (or slice-seeding). The slice-seeding machine Sprigs & Twigs uses has a row of parallel cutters and a seed dispersal mechanism that puts grass seed in the small slices cut in the lawn. As a normal part of this process, our machine also de-thatches to remove thatch buildup.

Every fall, you should aerate first and then dethatch and slice seed while the aeration holes are open. If your soil test calls for lime, it would be very good to also add that while the holes are open.

If you need help with soil testing and analysis, aeration, slice-seeding or de-thatching, give us a call.

Sprigs and Twigs is a highly regarded, professional, full service, national award winning Landscape Design, Installation, Maintenance, Tree Care and Lawn Care Company. We are completely organic. Visit our website at www.sprigsandtwigs.net or call us for more information.



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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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