

SOUTHERN LAWN

TIMES

A monthly E-Newsletter for Father and Son Pest and Lawn Solutions

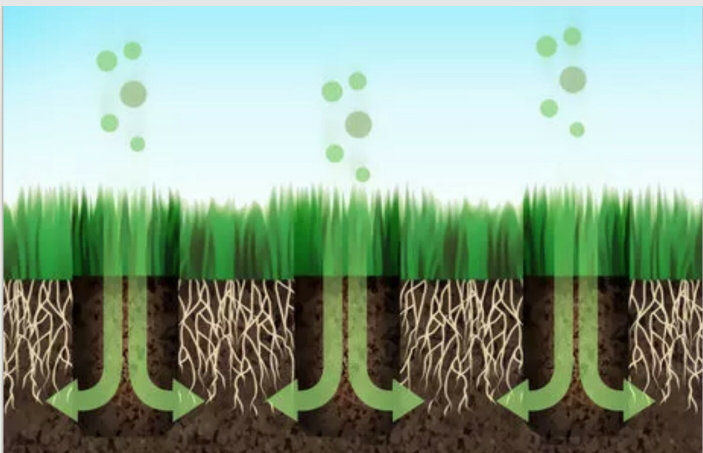
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What we are doing this month and why.

This is the last month to apply our fall/winter fertilizer formula this month which encourages root growth as the grass is coming out of winter dormancy. We will begin applying our growing season fertilizer formula next month when temperatures climb and remain above 80 degrees. The reason we wait to apply that formula is the grass will not absorb nitrogen, the main ingredient in that formula, until the temperature gets that warm. We are also continuing to apply pre-emergent weed control to suppress winter weeds. We will apply pre-emergent weed control throughout the year to keep constant pressure on weed populations. We are also applying post emergent weed control to control actively growing weeds.

As we move into spring and summer, insect pest activity will increase. The exact timing and severity of the pest activity varies from year to year, but we start keeping an eye out for chinch bugs and sod web worms now. However most years, they don't start showing up until at least April or May. We will apply fungicide as needed when we notice disease activity occurring and we will apply insecticide for mole crickets as needed.



WHAT IS WINTER KILL AND HOW DOES IT EFFECT YOUR LAWN?

If you have a centipede lawn that looked healthy last fall but some or all of it fails to green up and come out of dormancy in the spring, it could have been affected by winter kill.

Centipede is usually affected by winter kill during winters with wide temperature swings and unusually cold weather. The reason centipede grass is vulnerable to winter kill is it is particularly responsive to temperature changes and will start to come out of dormancy with only a few days of unseasonably warm weather. If this happens too early, say in December, and is then followed by a hard freeze, the stress of the cold on a lawn that is coming out of dormancy could be enough to kill it, especially if the lawn has been under any other stress the previous growing season.

This winter has given us the "perfect storm" of temperature fluctuations for winter kill to occur. We had an extremely mild winter, followed by a hard freeze, followed by record high temperatures, followed by near record low temperatures between December and March. This temperature fluctuation could be enough stress to injure centipede lawns and especially so if other stresses were in play last growing season.



HOW TO DEAL WITH MOLES IN YOUR LAWN.

Moles are mammals about the size of a mouse that live underground and borrow through the soil. They have extremely powerful front legs and large front paws they use to tunnel with. They have a keen sense of smell they use to locate food but they have no eyes and are blind.

Moles can create unsightly tunnels and mounds in a lawn with their borrowing, as well as destroy grass. Heavy populations of moles can destroy areas of a lawn.

A common misconception is that treating a lawn with insecticide will drive the moles away since moles feed on insects. The reason this doesn't work is that it is impossible to eradicate all the insects from the soil. Even if it were possible to eradicate all the insects that live in the soil, it would not be responsible since most insects are beneficial, including earthworms, which happen to be a favorite food of moles.

There are three basic methods for treating moles: traps, poisons and ultrasonic ground stakes, all of which can be ordered through Amazon or purchased at garden centers.

Which one works best? Many of our customers have expressed success using the solar powered, ultrasonic stakes. And of all three methods, these are also the easiest to use and are the first method we recommend when trying to deal with moles.

WHEN SHOULD I AERATE MY LAWN?

Aeration is the process of pulling small cores of soil, about the size of your finger, out of the lawn. This loosens the soil, allowing it to better absorb oxygen, water and nutrients.

Aeration is never a bad thing to do, however there are certain conditions in which it is more beneficial. Lawns with a lot of tree root competition will benefit from frequent aeration. Also, lawns that have heavy traffic will benefit from aeration.

Aerators can be rented from most local rental stores or some landscape companies offer the service.

If you chose to aerate your lawn yourself, first mark all sprinkler heads to avoid running over them with the aerator and damaging them. Then run the aerator back and forth in one direction over the entire lawn, then back and forth over the lawn at 90 degrees to the first direction so you end up with a checkerboard pattern. After the aeration, run through the sprinkler system again to make sure no heads were accidentally damaged or any shallow irrigation pipes were punctured.

Lawns with a lot of tree root competition or heavy traffic can benefit from 3-4 aerations a year.

WATERING INSTRUCTIONS

At the time of this writing, we are forecasted to have high temperatures in the high 70s for the next 2 weeks with periodic precipitation. Under these conditions, it is appropriate to start watering 2-3 times a week and increasing the frequency as the temperature gets warmer.

Always apply 30-45 minutes of water per zone when irrigating. Do not reduce the the amount of water applied, only adjust the frequency it's applied.

The ideal time of day to water is in the early morning hours, while the dew is still on the ground. This is generally between midnight and 8 AM. The advantage of watering during this time is 1. You are not extending the number of hours during the day the grass is wet there by encouraging disease activity. 2. Less water is lost to evaporation. 3. There is less wind during the night to blow the spray pattern off target.

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