Essential Fall Lawn Maintenance Tips

As summer transitions into autumn, it's time to shift your lawn care routine to ensure your grass remains healthy and vibrant throughout the fall and into the winter months. Fall lawn maintenance is crucial for a lush, green lawn  next Spring. Following are tips to help you maintain your lawn during the fall season.

1. Keep Mowing, but Adjust the Height

One common misconception is that you can stop mowing your lawn once the cooler weather sets in. In reality, you should continue to mow your lawn during the fall. However, adjust your mower's cutting height to leave the grass a bit longer. This longer grass provides insulation for the roots and helps prevent weeds from taking hold.

2. Rake Leaves Promptly

Falling leaves are a hallmark of autumn, but allowing them to accumulate on your lawn can lead to problems. Piles of leaves block sunlight, trap moisture, and create an ideal environment for disease and pests. Regularly rake or use a leaf blower to remove leaves from your lawn. You can also consider mulching them with a mower to provide natural nutrients for the soil.

3. Aerate and Overseed

Fall is an excellent time to aerate your lawn. Aerating involves perforating the soil with small holes to allow better air and nutrient circulation to the grassroots. After aerating, overseed your lawn to fill in any bare patches or thin areas. This practice encourages healthy grass growth and prevents weeds from taking over.

4. Fertilize Appropriately

Your lawn still needs nutrients in the fall, but the type of fertilizer you use matters. Choose a fall-specific fertilizer with a higher ratio of potassium (the third number on the fertilizer label) to help strengthen grass roots and improve overall winter hardiness. Apply the fertilizer according to the manufacturer's instructions, and make sure to water, as indicated.

5. Irrigation and Watering

As the temperatures drop, your grass still needs adequate hydration to survive the winter. Adjust your irrigation schedule to provide about 1 inch of water per week, either from rainfall or supplemental watering.

6. Weed Control

Fall is an ideal time to tackle weeds. Weeds are actively growing in the fall and are easier to control before they go dormant for the winter. Consider applying a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent winter weeds from taking root.

7. Address Lawn Diseases and Pests

Keep an eye out for signs of lawn diseases and pests. If you notice any issues, consult a lawn care professional or your local nursery for guidance on appropriate treatments. Early intervention is key to preventing these problems from spreading.

Proper fall lawn maintenance is essential for a beautiful and healthy lawn year-round. Remember that each lawn is unique, so adapt these tips to suit your specific grass type and local climate conditions.

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*Prepared by CCCA Yard of the Month (YOM) Committee*