

BEST PRACTICES



The Benefits of Lawn Aeration Straight from a Lawn Care Professional

Lawn aeration helps make your grass beautifully green and healthy. Aerating your lawn:

- Reduces soil compaction,
- Creates more space for water and air,
- Allows for more nutrient uptake by the roots of the grass, and
- Reduces stormwater runoff by absorbing rainfall.

**But how do you aerate your lawn?
Here are some easy tips for you to follow:**

1. **Rent from a company that maintains their equipment** and takes time to go over safe and proper operation.
2. **Team up with your neighbors to rent a lawn aerator.** Aerating takes a little longer than mowing the lawn, so you and a few neighbors could chip in and aerate a few lawns in one day. Between all of you, someone will have a small truck to transport the aerator to your neighborhood. The rental yard will usually have some straps and ramps you can use.
3. **Timing is key. Fall and spring are the best times to aerate.** Fall is the best time because grass is working on building roots rather than top growth. It's good to aerate when it's not too soggy and not too dry. If the soil is too wet, it becomes a difficult and sloppy job. If the soil is too dry, it can be difficult to pull a good plug.
4. **It's important to "pull a good plug."** To pull a good plug, make sure you are using a "core" type aerator, and that the aerator pulls a 2 to 3 inch plug.
5. **Before you start aerating, walk and scan the lawn for debris and obstacles.** Flag sprinkler heads, and look for meter and valve boxes.



6. **Safe and steady is the way to go.** When you start, remember it's not a race. Walk the aerator around the edges 3-4 times. Do the edges in opposite directions to get the hard to reach spots, but don't sweat it if you can't get all the nooks and crannies.
7. **When going back and forth, overlap 25 to 50 percent.** Don't worry, you won't hurt anything.
8. **After you aerate add lime, over-seed (with a mix of grass suitable for the Pacific Northwest) and apply slow-release fertilizer.** Buy these products from a trusted local source, such as a turf farm. The knowledge of the staff and quality of materials will save you time and money.
9. **Test first to see if you soil needs lime.** Lime adjusts soil pH, helping to control the moss and increase nutrient uptake. You generally apply lime at 35 lbs. per 1000 square feet, but testing the pH of your soil will give you a more accurate idea of what you need for your lawn . Lime pellets work better than the powder type.
10. **Use a quality, certified grass seed mix for use in the Pacific Northwest.** If you have some shady areas, then use a shade mix. Usually, seeding at 6-8 lbs. per 1000 square feet is adequate. Fall is great for over-seeding because the soil is warm from the summer months, there is rainfall to keep seeds moist during germination, and the new seedlings can establish good roots before summer.
11. **Use a slow-release or organic fertilizer.** With the soil surface being opened up, the food can get right down to the roots of the grass. Be sure to read the label carefully and don't over apply. More is not better when it comes to fertilizer!

*If you live in the City of Olympia team up with your neighbors and rent an aerator for free.
Check out Olympia's website for more information:
olympiawa.gov/city-utilities/storm-and-surface-water*

About the author: Rick Longnecker is a native of Western Washington, a landscaper and a dad who wants to be a responsible steward, so a thriving environment can be passed on to the next generation of gardeners. He can be reached via email at rickl@budsandblades.com

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