

BEST PRACTICES



Fall is the Time to Renovate Your Lawn!

Lawn aeration is key to renovating your lawn

Did you know fall is the perfect time to help your lawn grow stronger and healthier? One of the best ways to give your lawn what it needs is by aerating it. But what exactly is aerating and how can you do it?

Aeration is the process of punching holes in the soil to optimize nutrient, air, and water flow. Often times the soil beneath your lawn is compacted, not allowing these key components to circulate well. Compacted soils lead to shallow and weak roots and poor lawn appearance.

Aeration can improve the physical properties of soil resulting in a healthier, more resilient lawn. Lawn aeration helps:

- Improve soil texture, structure, density and porosity
- Increase microbial activity in soil
- Increase nutrient uptake by grass roots
- Decrease stormwater runoff by increasing stormwater infiltration



Choosing the right fertilizer matters.

Avoid lawn fertilizer products such as weed and feed, which usually contain 2,4-D herbicides, that have been linked to cancer in dogs (tinyurl.com/HerbDogCancer). For a list of safer lawn products, visit GrowSmartGrowSafe.org

Now that you've decided to aerate, here are some easy tips to follow:

1. Choose your aerator rental

- Opt for a "core" type aerator that pulls 2–3 inch plugs.
- Team up with your neighbors to rent a lawn aerator and aerate a few lawns in one day.
- Use a company that maintains their equipment and takes the time to go over safe and proper operation with you.

If you live within Olympia city limits, visit olympiawa.gov/stormwater and learn how to rent an aerator for free!

2. Remove any obstacles from your yard

- Hand pull weeds when ground is moist and before they develop deep roots.
- Mow your lawn so your aerator has less layers to go through.
- Rake and compost leaves, sticks, and grass clippings.
- Flag sprinkler heads, valves, and meters to help you steer clear.

3. Check soil moisture

- It's best to aerate when the soil is moist, not too soggy or too dry.

- If the soil is too wet, you may damage the lawn and it may be difficult to operate the aerator.
- If the soil is dehydrated and hard, it can be difficult to pull a good core.

4. Aerate carefully

- Walk the aerator back and forth, overlapping runs 25–50 percent.
- Overlap 2–3 times, in opposite directions, around high traffic areas and at edge of lawn.
- Leave your plugs on the ground to decompose and release nutrients.

5. Give your lawn some TLC

- Overseed your lawn in early fall once rains begin to keep seeds moist during germination. A thick healthy lawn is your best defense against weeds.
- Choose a Pacific Northwest seed mix that is blended to suit the amount of sunlight your lawn receives.
- Apply a “prilled type” lime if your soil pH is below 6.0 (no more than 35 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. per application).
- If you are going to fertilize, select a fertilizer containing >50% “slow-release” nitrogen (natural organic fertilizers are usually slow-release), and carefully follow the application instructions on the bag.

For more information on aerating, how to have a beautiful lawn using natural lawn care methods and to see our lawn care video series, visit streamteam.info/actions/lawn-care/.

Fall Lawn Care Tip: Rake those Leaves!
Rake fallen leaves off lawn to avoid lawn dieback.
Alternatively, mulch mow light layers of leaves into lawn.

Source: Stream Team News, Spring 2011