

TIPS FOR IMPROVING THE LONG TERM HEALTH OF YOUR LAWN.

Proper care of an established lawn does more than affect the immediate appearance of the turf; it also affects the turf's long-term health and ability to resist pest attacks. Follow this tip to help meet these goals.

DETHATCHING

Thatch is the layer of undecomposed plant tissue that lies just above the soil. It is made up of grass parts (stems, rhizomes, stolons, leaves, and roots) that are high in lignin, a material that is very tough for soil microorganisms to break down.

A moderate thickness of this thatch is necessary and a beneficial part of a lawn. However, when the thatch layer becomes too thick (more than ½ inch – 13mm) it becomes a problem and leading to reduced turf health through:

- preventing the grass from developing deep roots,
- preventing water, air, and nutrients from getting to the roots, and
- creating an ideal environment for harmful insects and diseases.

Excess thatch can be combated by the use of mechanical and cultural methods.

Mechanical methods such as power raking and core aerating can reduce the thatch layer.

Proper cultural practices such as topdressing with compost and correcting soil pH can be helpful. Topdressing works by stimulating the soil microbial population needed to breakdown thatch.

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