

# Spring Lawncare

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The lawn is usually the focal point of the garden. If it is in poor condition, the entire garden looks a mess. With only a little time and effort, the condition of a lawn can be improved considerably. Follow our step-by-step guide to get your lawn looking good and give your whole garden a facelift.

## Step 1 – Mow at the correct height

If you have a mower with adjustable cutting heights (ie a rotary or cylinder mower) keep the first few cuts high (about 1") and gradually reduce the height of cut as the season progresses. When the grass is growing vigorously, cut once or twice a week and try to mow at right angles to the previous cut. Remove any debris from the lawn before cutting and trim edges after mowing. Re-define edges with a half moon edging iron for a really crisp, neat look. This only needs to be done once a year, but can really make a lawn look good if the edges have become a little indistinct.

## Step 2 – Feed the lawn and control weeds and/or moss

In order to keep grass green and healthy it is important to apply a spring feed. Should weeds and/or moss be present, these may be tackled at the same time if you use a combined feed and weed and/or mosskillers. For medium to larger lawns it is easiest to use a granular product, as it is the quickest to apply over a larger area if you use a lawnspreader (ensure the lawnspreader is compatible with the product). When using a spreader, it is important to apply the product evenly – i.e. not to go over areas twice or overlap. Most granular lawn products need to be watered in if no rain falls within 48 hours of application – put the sprinkler on for about an hour to wash the feed down to the roots. There are some granular products that do not need to be watered in such as the Evergreen Lawn builder range (available as feed and weed, feed and mosskiller or straight feed. These will feed gradually over a period of time). Other products such as Aftercut or 'I Want to Feed my Lawn After Cutting may be applied straight after cutting, several times a season, to give sustained greening, without the need to water in.

Liquid and soluble products are also available, although these tend to be better for smaller lawns as they are generally applied with a watering can (apart from soluble lawn feeds, which may be applied via a hose end dilutor). Both soluble and liquid lawn feeds give a rapid green up and, as they are applied with water, there is no need to water them in. For combined feeding and weeding on larger lawns there are some liquid feed and weeds that may be applied through a sprayer, such as Vitax Green Up Feed and Weed. If a lawn is particularly weedy it is often best to treat the weeds separately, with a liquid lawn weedkiller such as Verdone Extra or Lawn Clear. These may be applied with a watering can or, even more efficiently, with a sprayer.

## Step 3 – Scarify and aerate as appropriate

If you have applied a moss control product the moss will turn black within a couple of days, it will be necessary to rake out the dead moss. Either use a spring tine rake with good downward pressure or a scarifier (useful for larger areas, as scarifying is hard work!) The lawn will look a bit of a mess immediately afterwards, but don't worry – it doesn't take long to recover and will benefit greatly from this treatment. Any areas which are compacted or which were heavily infested with moss will benefit from being spiked to a depth of about 6cm with a garden fork, at intervals of about 30cm.

## Step 4 – Apply a top dressing

This is not absolutely essential, but it really does improve the health and appearance of a lawn. No self-respecting green keeper would fail to do this! You can buy ready mixed turf dressing. All you have to do is to apply a good spadeful every square meter or so and brush it evenly over the lawn, working it into the holes if you have spiked the lawn.

## Keeping your lawn looking good throughout the summer

- Mow frequently (once or twice a week) when the grass is growing vigorously. In dry weather mow less often (i.e. every 1-2 weeks) and raise the height of cut to avoid placing the grass under stress. It is better for the turf if you mow at right angles to the previous cut.
- If the grass starts to look a little dull and lifeless, this is a sign that it is under stress through lack of water. Although the grass will recover from this, it does make it more prone to moss and weed infestation, so it is helpful to apply water in drier spells. Applying water thoroughly once or twice in dry spells is better than applying small amounts of water more frequently. Keep the sprinkler on for about an hour and water in the evening to minimize evaporation. If you have time, it is also beneficial to lightly prick over the lawn surface with a garden fork beforehand to create channels for the water to go down.
- If the lawn needs a quick boost, then a top up feed may be applied. Soluble or liquid lawn feeds are likely to be the best bet at this time of year, unless there is plenty of water in the soil.

For further information on lawncare, the New Lawncare Expert is a very useful reference