



EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
with Tim Goom

Laying down the lawn!

The chilly weather heralds the hibernation of garden growth (and a few gardeners!). Whilst you may be welcoming a rest from the rigours of warm weather gardening, some maintenance will ensure a healthy head start come spring. Over the summer your lawn has provided you with a lush backdrop for your backyard cricket and family barbeques so now it's your turn.

Whether your existing lawn needs replacing completely or you are sewing a brand new lawn, or you are simply undertaking maintenance, preparation is vital to ensure optimal lawn health.

New lawns

For those landscaping a new subdivision or a new site, it is important to analyse and potentially amend soil structure before seeding your lawn. Many subdivisions/new builds are being constructed over compacted clay with little top soil. Clay soil can be very dense, and significantly limit root growth, moisture retention and drainage - the perfect storm for a struggling lawn. Aeration and a top dressing of 10cm soil will be essential before seeding. Adding Gypsum will also improve the texture of your soil by breaking it up, better enabling germination.

Established lawns

Aeration

Aeration involves perforating the lawn with small holes and is a MUST for lawn health - it enhances water absorption, improves fertiliser effectiveness, reduces water run-off and puddling, improves turf resistance, enhances heat and drought stress tolerance and improves overall air flow. Most lawns should be aerated annually. Heavily used lawns, or those growing on dense clay or subsoil may need aerating more frequently. Pay particular attention to gateways and other areas of concentrated use. Aeration is best carried out when the lawns are under less stress, so Autumn is a good time. You can manually aerate with a garden fork by spiking the entire lawn using a straight up and down motion or hire an aeration machine. Holes should be around 10cm deep and 15cm apart.



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Scarifying/dethatching

Over time dead stems and roots build up between the top of the soil and the grass blades, and this 'thatch' prevents water and air penetration. This in turn encourages pests and disease. If your lawn is thick, spongy or browns off quickly when dry, it is probably time to scarify/dethatch. You can do this manually (with a dethatching rake) or mechanically, ideally in Autumn or Spring. Top dressing after scarifying will encourage lush growth. Scarifying will also help remove moss from lawns, as will pruning nearby trees to improve light levels.

General tips

- The pH of your lawn soil should be tested every couple of years to maintain a neutral/slightly alkaline pH (6-6.5). Garden lime or dolomite will reduce acidity, sulphur or ammonia will reduce alkalinity.
- Ensure lawn irrigation is reduced over the colder months, over watering can cause a raft of issues, such as fungal growth. Once temperatures start to rise again in September, test your irrigation system hasn't been damaged over winter.
- For quick lawn weeding maintenance, it is best to hand remove weeds, then sow seed over any bare patches. You can sew seed straight away rather than waiting for weed spray to take effect - and avoid chemical use.
- Raise the mower height another notch for the all-important final pre winter cut. Mowing provides an instant facelift to your lawn but be careful not to mow too short, grass blades should be 25mm and over. Winter is a good time for lawn mower maintenance, especially ensuring blades are sharp and clean and rearing to go for spring.

Call Goom Landscapes to discuss how to attain the perfect lawn which will be the envy of your neighbourhood!

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0800 GOOM LS
goom.nz
CHRISTCHURCH QUEENSTOWN WANAKA

