

## The Dog Days of Summer Wreak Havoc on Lawns

The end of summer is near. Labor Day brings us the last barbeque weekend. The kids are settled into school. Your lawn is looking as tired and heat exhausted as you feel. Good news, fall is the best time to install or renovate the compacted tired old grass. At El Dorado Nursery & Garden hear about lawn troubles on a daily basis. Most of these problems are the same, brown patches, water run off, and compacted soil.

Unfortunately, most lawn problems come from improper care and misinformed homeowners. Here is a sampling of what we hear all day long.

*My turf needs to be watered everyday or even twice a day! It still has brown patches.*

Lawns should be able to perform well with watering every other day at most. Most brown patches come from irregular sprinkler coverage and incorrect watering. After your system has run-check the brown areas to see that they are moist. If not, time to adjust the sprinklers.

*My landscaper set the timer to water twice a day three years ago, I even added a time mid day and it's still dying!*

Lawns should be able to perform well with watering every other day at most. Chances are you are watering 15 minutes at 9am and 15 minutes at 4 pm. Please stop. We do not recommend watering anything after 4pm. Try adjusting your timer to water at 4am and again at 9am, set the time to allow for one inch of water. You will need to adjust your timer to the season.

*My lawn is sloped and the water just runs off, so I need to keep it constantly wet!*

Lawns should be able to perform well with watering every other day at most. Again adjusting your timer so that less water is applied at one time, while cycling the timer again a few hours later should prevent this. Run off is a sign of too much water-too quickly and compacted soil. Our clay soil holds water but absorbs it very slowly. Aerating your lawn and adding organic compost will help. Compost puts air spaces into the compacted clay.

*I own stock in EID and I don't care how much water it takes to keep my grass green!*

Lucky You! Over watering your lawn leads to other problems and seldom makes the lawn greener. Over watering will cause the roots to rot and therefore prevent the roots from absorbing water.

Most lawn problems are preventable if time is taken to prepare the area before your lawn is installed, maintain it by aerating and de-thatching after you have your lawn, and reduce the water.

*My lawn looks terrible. Can I fix the lawn I have, or do I just start all over again?*

You need to ask yourself a few questions. What percentage of the lawn is looking bad? If the percentage is better than half, time to redo. How much thatch build-up is there?

Thatch is a combination of old grass stems, roots only partially decomposed forming a felt like layer, which can block water and nutrients from passing through.

What kind of preparation was put into the existing lawn? Will the lawn get a minimum of 30% direct sunlight as needed to perform well?

If the turf is more than a few years old, matching the grass will be unlikely due to changes in the seed available. You have two choices, renovate or replace.

Renovating a Lawn:

- \*Mow the turf to the lowest setting available on your mower.
- \*Rake dead thatch from lawn. There is a special hand rake for this purpose, if it's a small area. Larger areas may require renting power equipment. At this point, your lawn will look awful!
- \*Aerate the ground twice over. Proper aerating actually pulls plugs from the soil. This helps to open up the ground and allow nutrients to get down to the roots. We recommend raking up all the soil plugs and adding them to your compost pile.
- \*Spread a 1" layer of compost over the ground, we recommend Gardner & Bloome Soil Building Compost that is rich in Bat Guano, Earthworm Castings, Kelp Meal and contains gypsum to help loosen hard soils.
- \*Leaf rake to help distribute the compost evenly into the holes.
- \*Spread seed using the new lawn rate as listed on the package. This rate should be about 1# per 100 sq.ft. A dwarf type fescue seed is a tough heat tolerant lawn choice for lower elevations. Use a bluegrass/perennial rye blend for higher elevations.
- \*Apply starter Fertilizer, GreenAll Surestart is a good choice at the same rate as the seed.
- \*Water thoroughly.
- \*Keep new seed moist until germinated, and then reduce water after actively growing.
- \*Mow when needed and feed with a balanced fertilizer after the third mowing.

New lawns:

(If you decide to sod or seed, the ground preparation is identical.)

- \*Soak the ground to be worked a day or two ahead to soften it up a little.
- \*Remove old sod. This can be done by hand with a mattock, rolling method and a strong back. Renting power equipment may be a better choice.
- \*Till the ground to be planted. I recommend the largest tiller available to accomplish this job. After all we would not be the mountains without rock. Try to avoid tilling under the drip line of existing trees if possible.
- \*Pull out the largest rocks and save for another landscape project.
- \*Add 2" of Soil Building Compost. Till this into your soil. Do not add topsoil unless the level of the area to be planted needs to be raised. The idea is to allow the turf to mature into the native soil. Remember, do not raise the existing grade around plants already established, this will kill them.
- \*Rake surface area level and water well. This will allow the soil to settle and will show where low spots may occur. Re-rake where needed. Keep soil level one and a half inches below existing sidewalks and mow strips.

Now you are ready for seed.

- \*Roughen up surface of soil with a leaf rake. The small furrows created doing this will allow the seed to settle in. If seeding, follow the full seed rate on the package. This should be about 1# per 100sq.ft. Cover the seed with a very thin layer of compost, about 1/8"

If you are going to sod. Please come by and run barefoot through our display lawn. We have four sod choices planted at the nursery for you to choose from.

- \*Apply starter fertilizer then sod (*look for the new Bolero Plus sod*). Start with a half roll of sod and alternate each row to keep end seams from matching. Use a sod roller when finished to remove air pockets and seat sod with the ground. \*Water about twice a day or

as weather demands. Physically check before watering if the temperature is fluctuating. Reduce watering to once a day after approximately 2 weeks.

\*Mow when needed and feed with a balanced fertilizer after the third mowing.

Sit back, enjoy your work, sipping an iced tea and knowing your lawn will be the best on the block! You have put a lot of work into this so, while sipping remember to check your irrigation often and adjust it as your lawn matures. Rest for next month, we will be looking at the best fall color shade trees for the summer hammock! Be sure to check our webpage for the “Honey, please do list” for your monthly lawn care updates!

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