

November 2, 2010

Fall Lawn Care Tips

With cooler temperatures and fall rains, lawns that lost their luster this summer are green again.

The rebounding grass reminds us that lawns will survive with or without constant watering and that grass will not die, no matter how brown it goes.

This is the season to carry out simple steps to coax lawns past mere survival towards robust health. Healthy lawns stay green longer in the heat of summer, even without watering, when they can out-compete weeds.

These steps will also increase your irrigation efficiency if you do water the lawn.

- Aerate your lawn to relieve compacted soil and open up spaces for water to soak in rather than run off and flow over sidewalks and driveways.
- Apply lime to reduce the acidity of your lawn environment. Consider using half the density recommended and repeat the process in the spring.
- Top dress lawn with a thin layer (about 1/8 of an inch) of good quality topsoil and compost. This will improve the sub-soil, promote longer roots and better water retention. (Don't use sand, which increases drainage, but not water retention).
- Apply a fertilizer high in potassium to promote hardiness of the grass throughout winter.
- Over-seed lawn or bare areas. Soil is still warm and rainy cool weather means you will not need to water seed as much as during hot, dry summers.
- Consider power raking in the spring rather than just before winter. Dead grass parts (stems, leaves and roots) that create thatch will protect the plant from frost damage.
- Remember to turn off automatic sprinklers; rain provides all the water needed for lawns this time of year.

To enhance watering efficiency even more, create shade islands with new garden beds in the lawn and grow trees, berry bushes, vegetables and flowers. Here are five easy steps:

- Lay about 16 sheets newspaper or single sheet of cardboard down over the grass.
- Water to speed up decomposition (and to prevent it from flying off while you work).
- Cover with six to eight inches of good quality topsoil mixed with compost.
- Add your choice of berry bushes, shrubs, flowers, vegetables or native plants. Plants that provide food are an added bonus. Native plants can increase habitat for native creatures (birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians) and require no watering once established.
- Water well, then let the fall rains do the rest.

Remember, the Campbell River bioregion typically has a wet fall, winter, spring and a summer drought. Try to choose plants that are adapted to these conditions. Choosing the right plant for the location lets you use much less water to keep your garden thriving.

Questions? Call 250-203-2316 or e-mail the water hotline: water.wise@campbellriver.ca.

– 30 –

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