

HOME SWEET HOME

Fertilizing the lawn now, will make it green up early in the spring

You can leave your lawn alone in the fall and it will make it through the winter and be green again next year.

That's one method of lawn management — and an easy one.

The other method is to fertilize twice in the fall and have your grass survive winter and green up early in the spring. While you're at it, you can also apply herbicide to get rid of those nasty weeds.

IT'S UP TO YOU

"The nutritional status of the turfgrass plant greatly influences its ability to survive the winter and green up early in the spring," said Pam Charbonneau, a turfgrass advisor for the provincial agriculture ministry.

"Ensuring adequate surface drainage, thatch control, raising mowing height and (the) application of potassium and a late season application of nitrogen will result in good winter survival, early spring green up (and) deep roots which will withstand summer stress conditions."

Fertilizing a lawn in the fall is a two-step process, she said. The first step is to use a fertilizer with adequate levels of potassium and phosphorus. This should take place in early fall.

The second step is to use a nitrogen fertilizer.

The timing of that second step is important — it should be done when grass is still green, but no longer growing.

If it is applied too early it will induce

growth in the fall, which makes it susceptible to winter injury. If it is applied too late it won't be beneficial. In the southern part of the province the correct time to apply it is late October to early November.

The fall is also a good time to control weeds. Some weeds are easier to control in the fall.

Because cool temperatures and moist soil encourage grass to grow, there is time for the grass to fill in the gaps left by dying weeds.

The best way to fight weeds is to never allow them in your lawn. If you have a vigorous, healthy lawn, weeds will find it difficult to get a start. Charbonneau offers the following tips:

- Maintain a proper mowing height. Grass mowed too short is subject to weed invasion.

- Aerate your lawn. Many weeds thrive on compacted soils.

- Water deeply. Deep, infrequent watering promotes deep, well-rooted grass which can withstand drought.

Turf damaged by drought, disease and insects can leave open areas where weeds will grow.

Since you likely already have weeds, there are steps you can take now to get rid of them.

The application of a herbicide is the easiest way to control weeds.

"A standard treatment for broadleaf weeds is two, four-D mixed with one or more herbicides in a two or three-way mix," said Charbonneau.

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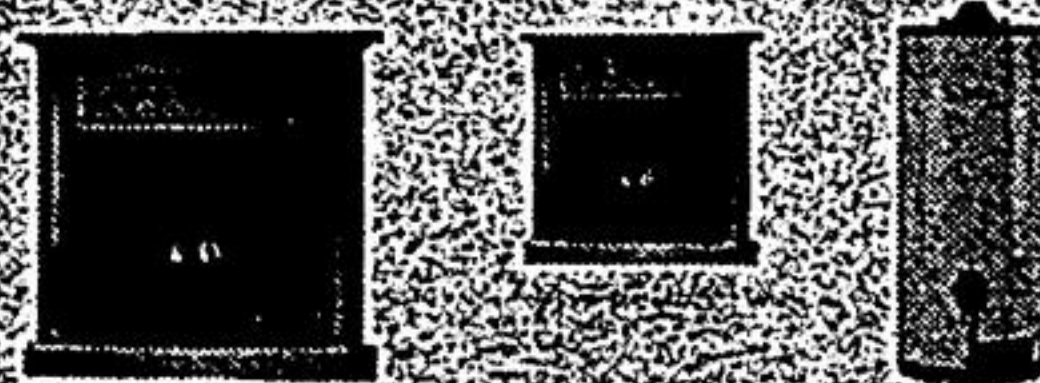
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