

A close-up photograph of a person's hands working in a garden. One hand holds a silver garden trowel with a wooden handle, digging into dark soil. The other hand is placing a small plant with yellow and purple flowers into the soil. In the background, there are green grass blades and other plants.

5 Steps to Get Your Yard Ready for Spring!

How is your lawn looking right now? Does it seem weather-worn and in need of some TLC to improve its appearance? Spring is just around the corner. Now is the time to take some proactive steps to revive your grass and restore your yard to its beautiful, green, lush state.



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Initial Preparation

If you still have debris on your lawn and in your flower beds from the winter, now is the time to start your Spring Clean Up. Begin by removing branches, debris, leaves or any other objects. This will prevent your grass from suffocating as well as avoid those unsightly dead patches.

Even if you raked in the fall, a spring raking is a must as you still need to remove grass that died over the winter. If you use a spring-tine rake with a strong upward pull, it will be easier to remove dead grass. Also, make sure to rake when the soil isn't soft and muddy, or you risk pulling up healthy grass crowns.



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1. Seeding

Does your lawn have bare patches? Creating a lush, vibrant lawn takes commitment, but you will be pleased with the rewards of a successful grass seed project. A high-quality grass seed with a germination rate of 85 percent or higher can give your lawn the extra boost it needs to grow, literally, to its fullest potential.

If you have brown spots on your lawn, it may be from pet urination. You can recover these bare spots by reseeding. Before reseeding, it is best to apply gypsum on the dead spots and then soak the area in water to neutralize the excess salts from the urine.

Don't wait until the lawn starts to green up before applying seed. The thin and bare soil spots in your yard can be seeded any time as long as the ground is not frozen.

Finally, patience is a virtue when it comes to seeded grass. Wait until the new sprouts are at least three inches tall before mowing.



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2. Fertilizer

When selecting a fertilizer, make sure it is a high-quality fertilizer and that you apply it in the correct quantity at the right time. It is critical that you follow the instructions on the package. The nitrogen can actually damage your lawn if you apply it too frequently or if you apply too much at once.

Before applying fertilizer, measure the throw of your spreader to make sure that you are following the right pattern as you move across your lawn. It is best to overlap the passes to make sure you are spacing your passes correctly. The simplest method is to purchase the correct amount of fertilizer for the size of your yard and set the spreader to a shallow setting. Pass back and forth again, perpendicular to the first paths, and repeat if necessary, until the fertilizer is all spread out evenly across your yard.



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3. Mowing

Most people assume that they only need to mow the lawn when it is getting too long. The truth is that it is better to mow the lawn before it grows too much.

Start mowing when the ground is dry enough and grass is long enough to require cutting. Cut at the proper height for your type of grass. If you mow too low, your short grass will allow sunlight to reach the soil, encouraging weed seeds to germinate. It also favors shallow root development, which makes the lawn more easily susceptible to drought stress.

To maintain good healthy grass, you need to mow it at the right height, and the right frequency. Make sure you use the 1/3 Rule - Mow often enough that you do not remove more than 1/3 of the leaf tissue with your mower.



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4. Aeration

Vital for a truly healthy lawn, aeration is the solution for compacted soil. Aeration will improve the ability of the soil to absorb air and water to the plant roots and improve the appearance of your lawn. How often you should aerate your lawn depends on soil type and how you use your lawn.

Late spring to early summer is the right time to aerate warm-season grasses. It is easier to aerate the grass when it is slightly moist, so plan to aerate your lawn the day after watering or the day after it rains.

After the lawn is aerated, the excavated soil plugs can be broken up, so they are dispersed evenly into the lawn. You can pound the plugs with the back of a rake, or merely mow the grass and the mower will break them up.



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5. Watering

Proper watering can help you achieve a healthy lawn. Too much water can be detrimental, so you will need to consider the amount of water you are applying as well as the frequency and time of day.

The best time of day to water is early in the morning, right when the sun is beginning to rise. This will allow the water to soak into the lawn before the sun comes up and the temperature rises. Watering at night leaves moisture on the grass for too long, which might lead to lawn disease problems.

Watering frequency will change with the weather. Typically, from April to May, you should water the lawn about once a week in April to early May. As it warms up, you will need to increase to 1-2 times a week. During the hottest times of the year, you will likely need to water every 2-3 days. Try to use about $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 inch of water each time you water. Use a rain gauge and time your sprinkler to prevent over-watering.

Make sure you set the timer of your irrigation system so that you schedule the right amount of watering for your system, lawn, and time of year.



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