

# Wm. Wheat & Son

## THE FLOWER & GARDEN CENTRE

520 Chester Road, Little Aston.

0121 353 7123 / 4090

### Gardeners Guide to:

#### LAWN MAINTENANCE (a brief guide for the busy gardener)

**MOSS** Moss is a symptom of poor grass growth and not the cause. Moss Killer application will only restrain the present moss infestation: it is important to take steps to restrain further infestation. Only expect a 70% success with the first treatment. Some of the principal situations that encourage moss are:

- Inadequate sun and light (e.g. shade from trees.)
- Excess moisture – poor drainage
- Drips from overhanging trees
- Excess animal urines (particularly bitches.)
- Soil compaction
- Lack of nutrient – e.g. neglected lawns
- Low pH i.e. acid soil conditions inhibiting bacteria activity and 'food' intake to roots
- Thatch build up created by inadequate mowing: a blunt cylinder mower or rotary mower with inadequate grass collection
- Mowing with a cylinder mower is always recommended because it is virtually impossible to eliminate thatch build up with a rotary machine. Regular raking is essential with the latter.
- Mowing too low in drought weather conditions
- Allowing lawn to 'dry out' in hot weather

*Unfortunately, it is almost a certainty that the moss infestation will re-appear to some extent during the following autumn even after moss killing treatment.*

Scarifying or raking before the application of an appropriate Moss herbicide will spread the airborne spores and increase or spread infestation including to your neighbours! Treatment should be applied between the months of March and October, June and July excluded.

**Moss and thatch treatment** – After herbicide application, wait for 2-3 weeks and then rake thoroughly (using mechanical aids if available e.g. a rotorake.) Remove as much of the dead moss and grass thatch as possible. Do not use for compost in less than 6 months. Scarifying may be continued with good effect during the mowing season (except when wet or during drought)

**Spring and summer feeding** – Apply a spring and summer fertiliser – these contain nitrogen (which encourages grass growth) but must not be applied in drought conditions. Read the application instructions carefully and do not overdose. This treatment should be repeated after approximately 6 – 8 weeks (but not after mid August.)

**Weed eradication** – If the weed infestation is slight and mainly large leaf e.g. dandelions, daisies etc. a proprietary spot herbicide such as Verdone is generally effective. Weed treatment is generally more effective if a summer fertiliser has previously been applied. Coarse weeds (dandelions, thistles, daisies etc) can be dug up (with a weed fork or similar) but ensure complete extraction of the root system. Some weeds e.g. plantains, clover, field woodrush etc require more specialised treatment.

**Autumn treatment (when grass growth and mowing is minimal)** – Remove fallen leaves and other debris. In humid weather, failure to do this will encourage disease e.g. Fusarium Patch. Attend to any other diseased areas – e.g. fairy rings, mushrooms, dollarspot etc. Hollow Tine or spike – the former only necessary where soil is compacted. Small areas can be done with a fork or hand push machines can be hired from hire stores. Rake to remove thatch and dead or 'horizontal growing' grasses (the latter generally due to mowing with a rotary machine.) as previously instructed, a moss inhibitor or eradicator must be applied before raking if moss is present. Failure to observe this will result in spreading moss spores. Re turf or seed any 'dead' areas. Attend to any serious undulations (high or low spots which inhibit mowing.) Apply an autumn fertiliser to encourage root development and disease resistance. Under no circumstances apply a Spring or Summer fertiliser containing nitrogen forcing growth that can seriously weaken grass and initiate disease e.g. Fusarium patch. As a supplement, a proprietary liquid feed can be applied by watering can or hose applicator – but whilst beneficial, this is no substitute for at least one solid feed.

**Mowing** – Ensure that rotary blade or cutting blade and cylinder are always sharp and machine cuts grass blades cleanly. Failure to observe this will result in a ragged cut and damage to the grass inhibiting the photosynthesis action (the means by which 'energy' essential for plant life is converted from atmosphere- thus weakening the grass. (Weal, yellow appearance) Never cut lower than is necessary – between ¼ in. Summer and 1 ¼ in. in Autumn and Winter and particularly in drought conditions.

**Watering** – Beneficial in dry weather conditions, preferably by sprinkler- and only in the shade of the evening to prevent scorching. Never in full sun conditions. Excess watering will create leaching and moss infestation.

**And finally...** During very wet, frost and snow conditions keep off the grass – your footsteps may be permanently engraved.

*William Wheat and Son Ltd would like to thank Nigel Steeley of 'Lawncare', Tel: 0121 354 2359, for compiling this guide.*