

Improving Spring Lawn Growth: Let It Breathe

By Brian Monaghan
April 2021

It's time to let your lawn breathe! April, May and June are great months for dethatching a lawn in our area. The benefits are almost immediate, and will last for years.

Organic lawn care is based on the premise that you want to out-compete weeds and reduce opportunities for pests, naturally. To achieve this, you must give the grass plants the best possible growing environment. If your lawn has a half inch or more of thatch, it could be robbing those plants of nutrients, moisture and oxygen for the roots. Also, that layer of thatch can be the nesting site of various harmful insects. You can remove the thatch by renting a power rake, or hiring a yard service.

To find out if you have a thatch problem: Look at a slice of your turf. Simply take a spade and remove a wedge from your lawn; then look to see if there is a spongy mass of grass-like material between the soil and where the grass plant blade begins. If that layer is a half-inch thick, it's time to remove it.

After running a power rake over your lawn, you will find a great deal of material that has to be removed. Rake it up and put it in your compost pile, or put it out for town yard waste collection. Due to the action of the power rake, your soil will also be ready for seeding. Since it is April, now would be a great time to over seed those bare spots.

Power rake machines can be rented at most power equipment rental stores. The machine is about twice as heavy as a lawn mower, so you might need help unloading it from your SUV, van or pickup truck. Or see if you can have it delivered.

First, using your regular lawn mower, cut your lawn down to a height of about 1 ½ inches. Next, run the power rake back and forth just like when you cut the lawn. Then, run it again at 90 degrees to your first run. Finally, collect the thatch and remove it. Don't worry about the look of your lawn when finished — it will recover in about 2 weeks.

The benefits of removing the thatch are numerous and long lasting. And by doing it in April, May or June, your lawn will recover quicker, and look better for the rest of the year. Try it, your lawn will surely like it!

