

# TURF TIDBITS



Your Turf Management Professionals

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## MOLES vs. VOLES

**Moles** are rodents that feed on insects, earth worms, and grubs underground (insectivore). They forage for those insects by digging and pushing themselves through the dirt; making an underground tunnel. In doing this, they sever the grass roots & raise the sod causing the grass above their tunnel to die. So, the damage looks like a 4" wide tunnel with dead grass on top. The tunnel is also soft; so soft that it can be pushed back down by stepping on it.

**How to fix the problem:** Green 4 Ever can help rid your lawn of moles through the use of mole bait, which kills

the mole. We can also kill their food source. Moles eat underground insects such as grubs. So you may have a grub infestation. By treating the grubs with an insecticide, we will be decreasing the mole's food supply, thus decreasing mole activity. Rake up any dead grass and overseed bare spots.

**Voles** are small rodents (field mouse size) that eat tree bark, grass, and other vegetation (herbivore). Most vole damage occurs during the winter months because it is easier for them to obtain their food while being protected by snow cover. When the weather warms up and the snow melts, you'll see the damage. It looks like a 2" wide, above-ground trail where the grass blades have been chewed off. The trails are not soft and the sod has not been raised, like it is with mole damage (see below). Also during this time of year, more predators (snakes, owls, haws) are abundant so the vole damage will diminish as they look for other places to hide.

**How to fix the problem:** The voles will make their way out of your yard when the snow melts. But if you have a few that are still lingering around, you can buy anything that you would buy to get rid of a mouse, such as traps, and place them through the yard (being careful of outside pets). Then, once they're gone, thoroughly rake through the area to get rid of the chewed off grass. The good news is that the voles do not KILL the grass. They just stunt it for a couple of weeks. With good raking, fertilization, and watering it'll be caught up with the rest of the yard in a couple of weeks. To help lower your risks of getting them again, rake leaves, mow short and use a vole bait in the late fall.



Mole damage - 4-6" wide, SOFT, underground tunnels. Large areas may need to be reseeded to become established again. Kill the moles with poisonous bait or kill their food source with the Preventative Grub Control.

Vole damage - 2" wide above-ground tunnels. Voles don't eat the crown or the roots, so the grass is still alive! It just takes a couple weeks for it to recover and catch up to the rest of the lawn. Raking helps!

# Spring

## SPRING TO-DO LIST

### LAWN:

- **Get the garden rake ready!** Aggressively hand rake through the lawn sometime in the spring, to rid the lawn of the dead, matted down grass. This allows MUCH better growth throughout the year. Then bag the clippings to "vacuum" the debris.
- **Apply Pre-Emergent.** Pre-emergent (also called crabgrass preventative) applied around the time the lilacs are blooming will prevent unsightly and aggressive weeds such as crabgrass, foxtail, and other annual grassy weeds from sprouting
- If you're **doing any re-seeding**, avoid these areas with the pre-emergent to avoid injury.
- **Fertilize!** Get a jump-start on the spring green-up by fertilizing with a balanced fertilizer
- **Check your journal** from last year and tackle any plans you wanted to accomplish for this year. If you don't have a journal, have fun starting one! It's great for lawn and garden ideas that might otherwise be easily forgotten.
- Look for **low, settled areas** maybe from excessive dripping water, where a stump was ground down, or erosion. Haul in some good quality dirt to level these areas out and re-seed.

### GARDEN:

- **Prune** trees & shrubs, EXCEPT spring flowering shrubs like forsythia or lilac. (hold off on pruning dogwood, maples, and birches to reduce excessive sap from bleeding out. Don't prune walnut or oaks to reduce the threat of disease)
- Begin to **cut back** any dead stems from your perennials. Level everything to the ground except grasses and Russian sage (cut them to about 6" for best results.)
- **Go shopping!** All the nurseries and garden centers are getting full of supplies!
- Start your **seeds!** Get a jump start on early season veggies like radishes, peas, broccoli & cauliflower. Transplant outside as soon as you're able to work the ground. They can withstand frosty weather.
- **Amend the soil** in your garden. Till in soil-additives such as untreated and free-of-disease leaves, twigs, sand, compost from your bin, or peat moss
- **Enjoy the sunshine!** ☺

## Spring Raking



This is a good example of Hand Raking (See below). Raking is so important in the spring!



### Is there a difference in power raking, spring clean-up, de-thatching, and hand raking?

The answer is YES.

When we visit lawns in this spring, we usually notice that many of them would benefit from a spring raking. Here are the different methods.

- **Spring Clean-up** - A gentler raking that gets the lawn ready for the season, by getting rid of all the dead, matted grass in addition to any debris such as sticks, leaves, rocks, etc. The yard is then mowed so the debris can be bagged and discarded. This should be done before any crabgrass preventer gets applied.
- **De-thatching** - the act of removing a portion of the thatch layer, which is underground. Techniques used are core aeration and power raking (see below). Aerations are much gentler on the lawn compared to power raking. Aerations are recommended every other year for those on a lawn care program. Power raking is recommended every 5-7 years.
- **Hand Raking** - The act of taking a normal garden rake and raking through the yard. This is recommended in the fall to pick up the fallen leaves, **but also every spring**. This method also rids the lawn of the dead, matted grass as well as any other debris left over from winter. After hand raking, you want to bag the clippings, to "vacuum" the debris.
- **Power Raking** - A form of de-thatching. A machine drops metal tines in the soil about 3-4" deep. The tines get pushed through the soil, drudging up A LOT of dead, matted down grass, and debris, but also good stuff such as root systems, and grass that's alive and healthy. This is not recommended for lawns less than 5 years old.

We recommend an aggressive hand raking or a spring clean up every spring, to rid the lawn of debris. If this is not done, you may be wondering, come June, why your lawn hasn't improved much. That's because if all that debris just sits there, it'll get in the way of good growth by hindering root development and water and fertilizer uptake.



### ARBOR DAY!! Plant a tree for Arbor Day. Mark your calendars for April 26<sup>th</sup>!

Arbor Day is a national celebration of nature that encourages tree planting.

The origin of Arbor Day lies in the 19th century. The driving force behind National Arbor Day was J. Sterling Morton. The history of Arbor Day is a history of the celebration of the importance of trees to human life. The history of Arbor Day is thus part of the modern movement towards awareness that we may need to cultivate "nature" a bit in order to preserve it.

**Thinking of overseeding soon?** We recommend overseeding in the early fall (around Labor Day) mainly because if you had crabgrass preventative put down with your spring application, that will stop the growth of the seed. Even without that, the tender grass seedlings are going to be trying to start their root system in the heat of summer. It's tough on them. But seeding in the spring can still be beneficial as long as the seed stays moist every day until it germinates. That means 2-3x per day. If you'd like a quote for a spring OR fall seeding, call the office today or respond to this message. 605-334-7399

# Winter BURN



Boxwood winter burn



Arborvitae winter burn



Yew winter burn

It's very common this time of year to see winter burn on some of our favorite evergreen plants in the landscaping. Winter burn is also called winter injury, winter kill, or winter desiccation.

It all means the same, but what does it really mean and how can you help to avoid it?

Evergreens stay green year-round and rely on the moisture in their root systems and leaves/needles to get them through the winter. But in our region, the ground freezes, and so can parts of the root ball of the plant. When this happens, they can't take up nearly as much water as when the ground is thawed, so they only have the moisture in their leaves/needles to help them through. However, an evergreen leaf/needle isn't very full of water. So, with our extremely **COLD**, **DRY**, and **WINDY** winters, it sucks the moisture right out of those needles. When the evergreen can't keep more water in its system than what's being taken away from that weather, winter burn happens. *The 3 most common evergreens that suffer from winter burn are pictured above)*

**Here are some ways to help avoid these problems:**

- Find other, more hardy plants that can overwinter without problems or risk of injury.
- If you really want the evergreen, plant it in a sheltered area where the blustery N & W winds won't get to it.
- Make a burlap screen using burlap and a few fence posts to help protect the plant.
- No matter where you plant it, you'll want to water the plant properly throughout the season, then decrease watering in Sept to harden the plant off & then give it heavy waterings in Oct until frost.
- You can purchase Wilt-Pruf at your local garden center to spray on the needles for extra protection.

