

*Wm. Wheat & Son*

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## Gardeners Guide to:

# Autumn lawn maintenance

Autumn is an ideal time to examine the lawn for summer wear and tear, and carrying out work in September will allow the grass to respond to treatment before soil temperatures fall too low.

### Scarifying

'Thatch' (old grass stems) can build-up on lawns between grass roots and foliage. Regular raking (Right) keeps levels at an acceptable level, but a layer greater than 1cm (0.5in) can impede water and fertiliser penetration. To remove such build-up rake vigorously but carefully with a spring-tine rake. For larger areas powered tools are available as single units or mower attachments.



### Aerating

Compacted lawns benefit from spiking to deter summer drought and winter waterlogging. For an average lawn aeration every two to three years should be adequate. Concentrate on areas that receive the most wear.

Small areas can be spiked with a garden fork, spacing holes 10-15cm (4-6in) apart. On waterlogged soils use a hollow-tine aerator every three to four years. This extracts plugs of soil from the lawn. After hollow-tining sweep up the plugs then top-dress with a sandy mixture to improve air and moisture penetration.

### Top dressing

Top dressing corrects surface irregularities and improves the texture of difficult soils, consequently encouraging greater rooting and thickening of turf. A simple mixture is three parts sandy loam, six parts sharp sand and one part compost or leafmould (by volume). Apply 2-3kg per sq m, working the dressing in well with the back of a rake.

### Over seeding

Overseeding the existing lawn with a suitable grass seed mixture (depending on individual requirements) will top up the grass, filling in gaps and worn patches before the onset of winter when moss is likely to colonise the lawn. Always raise the height of cut on your mower as autumn approaches to strengthen the grass and to choke out moss.