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## Seasonal Problems

This advice is of a general nature only, and if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to ring the office on 83263255 and to discuss this with our friendly staff. Thank you.

### Autumn / Winter

Summer heat and dry weather can often leave lawns the worse for wear. The summer holidays can often see the back yard being used as a cricket pitch or barbeque area, leaving the lawn thin and worn. Autumn is a good time to renovate lawns by rethinning, coring, oversowing and top dressing. Stronger grasses can be introduced to thin, patchy lawns resulting in hardier and healthier lawns. This is the time to allow the rains to help you establish the lawn. New lawns can also be planted all through the year, allowing rains to do the watering for you. Some instant turf lawns during Winter may not be in peak condition but as the weather improves in Spring so will the condition and appearance of the turf.

During Autumn, the weather can fluctuate from being still rather warm and dry to wet and cool. The soil temperature is beginning to drop, and now is the time to prepare the running grasses like couch and buffalo for winter.

Lawns are more susceptible to disease and fungus during this time as there can be a build up of humidity near the base stem, especially if the lawns are thick and spongy. Ways to combat this is through coring, scarifying ( or de thatching) high nitrogen fertilizers, fungal treatments, etc. It does depend on the type of fungus that is present.

As the weather cools down, so does the soil temperature, causing some running grasses to slow in growth, some going semi dormant. Most can be kept in good condition by lifting the blades of your mower one notch around mid – late April and fertilizing pre-Winter. Depending on the weather and soil temperature, some grasses may still grow, albeit slowly, and can benefit from treatment of organic fertilizer. As the plant will only take up what it needs, there is no waste. However, if there are frosts, then most of these grasses will go quite dormant and may discolour rapidly.

Since the beginning of the drought, many people have decided to let Mother Nature do the watering for them and have been installing their lawns during the Winter months. This is fine as long as the turf is available and as long as people realise that some turfs may not be at their best during the Winter but will recover and green up as the soil warms up in Spring. Each turf type is different with Kikuyu being one of the best all year round turfs for transplanting with a quicker recovery time and generally the best winter colour.

## **Spring / Summer**

### **Black Beetles and Cockchafers**

Black Beetles feed on all types of lawn, living sometimes deep inside your lawn's root zones and feeding their larvae with your lawn. They begin their feeding patterns around September, and continue their feeding until March the following year. Hence, please be on the look out for any obvious signs come September. Things to look for include:

- birds on the lawn (they poke their beaks beneath the surface to feed on the beetles);
- holes in soil;
- patches of dead turf with a poor root structure (if the turf in the patch breaks up or 'snaps' in your fingers then it is probably not beetle, it is possibly fungus or as a result of a dog urinating in that area, alternatively, turf that has been infested by beetles will pull out easily); and
- you may see evidence of black beetles about the size of a thumbnail.

Treatment involves one of our specialists applying beetle treatment to the affected and surrounding areas or using products purchased from your local hardware store or nursery. Note: no treatment is 100% guaranteed and reapplication on several occasions may be necessary.

### **Spring Rejuvenation**

- Running grasses (ie Buffalo, Couch etc.) have a dormancy period during the cooler months that tends to prevent growth but still allowing thatch build-up.
- Spring is the ideal time of the year to rejuvenate your lawn, by way of scarifying, which removes the dead thatch out of your lawn, and by coring, which alleviates soil compaction, promotes optimum growth and water retention, and thus saving you money on your water bill.
- Soil conditioning is another part of the rejuvenation process, whereby we add gypsum, fertiliser and (if necessary pH neutralisers) to improve the texture, quality and condition of your soil. This is a vital part of the rejuvenation process, and ensures optimum growth for your lawn.

### **Sprinkler System servicing**

We offer irrigation packages to suit your budget, both automatic and manual systems available, above and sub surface irrigation.

## Mowing

Evergreens – These lawns should be kept at a height of 4-6 cm at all times. Never cut more than 1/3 of the leaf in any one cut. The advantage of cutting weekly is to deter weed growth, and by lightly trimming off any new growth, you are encouraging deeper root zones and therefore a healthier lawn.

Running Grasses (Couch/Kikuyu) – Lawns should be mowed short on a regular basis (weekly is best). Many running grasses have become quite spongy during the dormancy period, and therefore may need scarifying to remove the excess thatch. Buffalo, however, likes to be kept a little longer and will stay greener during winter if allowed to be left longer but does like regular mowing during its growing season (spring, summer, start of autumn) but during winter can be left for longer periods with a light trim now and again.

## Watering

Running Grasses – Usually, rule of thumb, most running grasses are more drought tolerant, Kikuya being the most. During Winter, most of Autumn and the start of Spring while we are still getting intermittent rains, regular watering is not necessary. Being the driest state in the driest country in the world, each year differs so it does depend on our rainfall in your area whether your lawn needs water or not. During Summer, however, nearly all lawns need watering and it is better to deep water once or twice a week (unless you are watering in fertiliser, then daily until dissolved, if water restrictions allow) than to light water. Light watering more often causes shallow root systems which in turn mean the lawn will need more light watering more often – catch 22 situation. To train your lawn, especially after a wet winter, you will need to gradually starve the lawn of water without stressing it too much. Over a period of a few weeks, stretch the watering out extra days, but water for longer periods on the days you do water. Confused? We are available to chat to if you need any further information or clarification, rather than tear your hair out, ring us!

Please remember that during the summer months, it is important that you water the lawn the day before it is mown, and then don't water the lawn again until sunset on the day it has been mown or the day after. (Providing, of course, that the lawn has been mown prior to sunset!)

## New lawns

We also do new lawns during Spring, right through the year in fact, although if you are thinking of entertaining outside during the Summer then now would be a great time to begin the preparations for Instant Turf lawns, or for the budget conscious, Seeded lawns. Ring us for a free no obligation quotation 8326 3255

**N.B.: Please remember to heed any water restrictions that may be in force.**