Spring lawn care

Kris Collins gives his 10-point care plan for getting the lawn into shape

As we move ever closer to spring it's time to start thinking about your lawn care regime for the season. Late February and March is a key time for carrying out lawn maintenance, before the grass (and weeds, though hopefully not!) start to romp away. In the past few weeks you will probably have noticed worm casts appearing across the lawn, and this is the first signal that some attention needs to be given to the lawn in order to keep it in shape for this coming year.

Ease yourself into spring lawn care by getting out on dry days to sweep the worm casts into or away from the lawn in order to keep the surface level and to prevent an entry point for germinating weed seeds.

During wet weather it is best to stay off the lawn completely, but if waterlogging has been a problem over the winter it is worth getting on site and aerating the lawn in order to improve the drainage. Once the above tasks have been remedied the rest of the spring lawn care jobs can be carried out.

1. Raking

A SPRING-TIME rake is an essential tool if you want a good-looking lawn. In autumn the rake is used forcefully to remove thatch from the lawn, but a lighter approach is needed in spring to remove any thatch and debris missed in autumn. Removing thatch in volume before the grass has started to produce sideshoots will open the soil up to problematic weed seeds.

Instead lightly rake the lawn to rid it of winter debris, while perhaps removing small amounts of thatch. It will also help to pull up the grass for efficient cutting when mowing begins.

2. Brushing

WORM ACTIVITY increases at this time of year resulting in worm casts. Collected from the lawn it can be used as excellent compost ingredient, as there's nothing better! However, these aren't the only problem that needs brushing away. On colder mornings dew will form on the lawn and this needs to be removed if early mowing is planned. Using a besom or garden broom to do this also helps to get water down into the soil and to roots.

3. Aeration

IF WATERLOGGING has not been a problem this winter deep aeration - below 3in (7.5cm) - using a garden fork is not essential, particularly if this task was carried out in the autumn to relieve heavy compaction.

However, it is worth spiking the lawn to a depth less than 3in (7.5cm). This will break any surface matting and help fertiliser and water make its way easily into the soil. A garden fork can be used for this, but a purpose wheel spiker (Greenkey, © (01939) 560200, greenkeygarden.co.uk) will halve the time of the job.

Using a roller

ONLY DURING early spring does a roller have a part to play in maintaining established grass. If you have a roller (and not many people do these days), use only to reconsolidate any turf that has been lifted by frost. Instead of a heavy-duty lawn roller you could also do this by going over the lawn with a mower fitted with a back roller, and by pressing down on the handle as you go.