

# IF PLANTS COULD TALK

## Fall Turf Checklist

- 1) Seeding should be done in late August through September. Fill in any bald spots or renovated areas as the weather starts to cool. This will give enough time for the new grass to get established before the winter arrives.
- 2) Perform a Soil Test. Soil test results can provide critical information on soil acidity (pH) and current levels of soil nutrients. Unless you properly adjust and balance soil acidity (pH), fertilizers will not have the desired effect. Make the best use of your time and money by having a soil test done.
- 3) Apply lime in the fall only if required by soil tests. Since it will take some time to balance your soil's pH, applications in the fall produce noticeable results in the spring.
- 4) Apply the bulk of your fertilizer in the fall to encourage strong roots. Feed your lawn with a low nitrogen fertilizer with adequate phosphorus and potassium. Nitrogen will green up your lawn, but in the fall root encouragement with phosphorus and potassium is more important. These strong roots will get your grass through stressful times next season.
- 5) Reduce mowing height to one and a half inches in the late fall. This will improve airflow to the root zone and reduce the potential for snow mold and other problems in the winter.
- 6) Monitor thatch levels in your lawn. If thatch exceeds ½ inch in thickness, de-thatch lawns in the early fall. Excess thatch can enhance insect and disease problems in turfgrass. You can begin de-thatching in early September up through early October depending on weather conditions. Apply ½ pound of actual nitrogen after de-thatching to help turf recover. De-thatching machines are available at many garden rental stores. You can also use a de-thatching rake or conventional rake if the area is small. Proper de-thatching will allow adequate moisture, nutrients and air to reach the roots.
- 7) Aerate heavily compacted lawns in early fall through early October, depending on weather conditions. Years of excessive foot traffic or routine mowing can compact the soil and choke off oxygen to roots. The core aerator pulls small plugs of turf out of the lawn providing a new entrance for water and nutrients. Core aerator machines are available at local garden rental centers. There are also pull-behind attachments available for your ride-on mower. Break-up leftover plugs on the surface with a rake.