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## NEWSLETTER ~ SPRING 2005

### CURRENT APPLICATIONS • LAWN FERTILIZATION •

Lawn Fertilization applications began late this season as the result of late melting snow. Many lawns, especially in towns west of Boston, had large piles of snow at the end of driveways until mid-April.

Application one consisted of fertilizer, pre-emergent crabgrass control and broadleaf weed control. Despite the late start, the critical pre-emergent crabgrass application as part of application one was made on time to control summer crabgrass.

The snowy winter and cold spring had several impacts on lawn quality:

- Snow mold, a cold temperature disease active under snow, was prominent this spring. While many lawns were brown and matted as a result of the mold activity, most recovered quickly after a good raking and the return of milder temperatures. Snow mold seldom kills a lawn.
- Lawns in general were very slow to green up. This is especially true of some varieties of grass used in sod. It is not uncommon to see seeded lawns green up earlier in the spring than sodded lawns.
- Rodent damage was present on many lawns. Mice will feed on grass under the snow, resulting in one-inch wide "tunnels" of dead and devoured grass in random patterns throughout the lawn. The damage was generally in proximity to stone walls and wooded areas where the mice reside. Most lawns will recover from this damage; however, recovery is slow and may not be complete until the lawn has been mown several times.
- Dog (urine) damage was severe on many lawns, especially since dogs had limited access to the lawn with the snowfall. Damage was concentrated in small areas, as the dogs could not move around the entire lawn. As a result of the concentrated damage, seeding in some cases will be needed.

### CURRENT APPLICATIONS • TREE & SHRUB CARE •

Tree and shrub treatments began early, even when there was still snow on the ground. The first tree and shrub treatment needs to be made early, while the plants are still dormant. Thus, we begin making applications before trees and shrubs leaf out.

- The "winter moth" caterpillar is a real problem in the bedroom communities around Boston, especially towards the Cape. There are no known natural controls, and the caterpillars have exploded in numbers recently. The caterpillars can be controlled on existing plant materials, but they are a real problem when the area is quickly reinfested by additional caterpillars moving out of surrounding properties or wooded areas. Expect to see some defoliation in high population areas; however, most plants will recover and leaf out again unless the damage has occurred several years in a row.
- Diplodia Tip Blight is a severe fungal problem occurring mostly on two and three needle pines (red, black, Austrian, Scots, and mugho pines). The fungus initially kills newly emerging shoots, and eventually entire branches. SeaScape's disease treatments will slow the progression of the disease, and pruning out diseased limbs will help. However, larger, older trees will eventually succumb to the disease. Red pine and black pines especially should be avoided when selecting new plant material.

### SEASCAPE'S CALL AHEAD POLICY

SeaScape's policy is to call ALL lawn fertilization and tree & shrub customers ahead before making applications. We are unique with this practice. Competitors just show up when they are ready to do an application.

At SeaScape, we believe that this call ahead policy is an important part of our superior service. The call ensures that you won't be surprised by our visit. It gives you the opportunity to ask any questions or address any lawn concerns before our visit. We can then properly address these issues when we arrive to treat the lawn.

**THE SEASCAPE ADVANTAGE: We are highly qualified, licensed, fully guaranteed, and use premium dry fertilizers. As a locally owned company, we provide exceptional service and value.**

## CUSTOMER LAWN CARE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Q. *SeaScape uses 2 applications of spring pre-emergent crabgrass control. When I did my own lawn, I only used one. What's the need for 2 applications?*
- A. Early spring applications of crabgrass control will only control that crabgrass which germinates in the early spring. However, crabgrass will continue to germinate throughout the summer. A second application is used to extend the effectiveness of the controls and successfully suppress crabgrass germinating later in the season. University trials have consistently shown a second, or "split" application of crabgrass control is superior.
- Q. *I remember my father rolling the lawn in the spring. Should I be doing the same?*
- A. NO! Rolling, especially in the spring when soils are wet, does far more harm than good. Heavy rolling will compact soils, resulting in reduced root growth and lower water infiltration and soil oxygen content. Lawn growth will suffer.

If your lawn is uneven in the early spring, it is probably the result of frost heaving, and it will quickly level out with warming temperatures. Lawns can also be uneven from improper installation or surface tree roots. The best solution in these cases is topdressing with soil to fill in low areas.

## THATCH - It's Not Always Bad!

### Dethatching vs. Aeration; Spring Dethatching Problems

Thatch is a nasty word in the mind of most homeowners when it comes to their lawn. It's often assumed that all thatch is bad, and it must be removed yearly, usually in the spring.

Thatch is that layer of dying and dead leaves, stems and roots that develops between the top of your green lawn and the soil surface. Many homeowners will have the lawn "dethatched" annually to remove the dead material.

All lawns will develop some thatch over time, some much quicker than others. The amount of thatch that your lawn will develop is unpredictable, but it appears to relate to grass variety and soil conditions, especially soil reaction (pH). Thatch development is NOT related to the return of clippings to the lawn (they quickly

decompose), provided you are mowing on a regular basis (so, put the collection bag away!). Of course, clippings will be a problem if you let your lawn get very long between mowings.

A small amount of thatch does no harm to a lawn, and in fact can be beneficial. A lawn will typically develop a 1/4 to 1/2 inch of thatch within a couple of years after seeding. This amount of thatch will provide some cushion to the lawn, reduce surface runoff, improve water infiltration and reduce watering requirements by limiting soil surface evaporation.

When thatch becomes 3/4 to one-inch deep, it will become detrimental. This amount of thatch will harbor insects and diseases. It will also result in the grass becoming shallow rooted, making it more prone to drought. When thatch becomes this thick, control measures should take place. There are 2 methods to control thatch. Dethatching, with a powered mechanical dethatcher, or core aeration.

Dethatching is a labor intensive, drastic measure, resulting in considerable damage to the existing lawn. It should only be used where thatch layers are very thick and have become a severe problem. As the dead thatch is pulled out, good grass is removed as well. The process leaves the grass thin, resulting in weed and crabgrass germination. The material removed needs to be raked off the lawn and disposed. It is common to remove enough material to fill one or more trucks.

SeaScape generally recommends core aeration as an alternative to dethatching. Regular core aeration will minimize the potential of thatch build up. Aeration will remove thousands of finger-like cores of thatch and soil. The cores are left on the lawn, where they will quickly break apart and disappear back into the lawn. The soil portion of the core is left on top of the existing thatch, where it will speed up the natural decomposition of the thatch layer. Large amounts of dead material does not need to be raked up and hauled away.

In addition to reducing thatch buildup, core aeration has the added benefit of allowing moisture and oxygen to enter the soil, which helps root growth. Improved lawn thickness will result. When aeration is performed in the fall, it will not encourage crabgrass growth. In summary, aeration is a better choice for your lawn.

If you would like more information about either core aeration or dethatching, please give us a call.

### LANDSCAPING FACTS:

The horticultural industry in Southern New England is larger than most people realize. A recent survey was conducted by the Universities of Maine and New Hampshire on the state of the industry, consisting of landscape, lawn and tree services, as well as population of tree & shrubs and retail sales. In RI, Massachusetts and Connecticut alone, the industry employs over 55,000 people, and has a value of \$3.3 billion!

# Lawn Watering Guidelines

- Lawns in New England require about 1" of water weekly in the summer. If they don't receive it from rain or irrigation, they'll rapidly go into drought stress, turning dark green and then brown.
- If you have an irrigation system, water for approximately 30-40 minutes every other day. More or less watering should be determined by lawn condition and rainfall. Periodically check sprinkler patterns to ensure all areas are reached.
- If you're watering with a hose and sprinkler, water each area approximately 1½-2 hours, 2-3 times per week. Water more or less depending on lawn condition.
- The best time to water is early morning, 4 a.m. - 8 a.m. Watering at other times, however, is better than not watering at all.
- Use a coffee can under the sprinkler pattern to determine if you're applying 1" of water per week.
- If you do not or cannot water, your lawn may go into drought stress and turn brown. Mow high to reduce drought effects. SeaScape will monitor and apply insect controls as necessary (insects can cause major damage under drought conditions). Fertilizer applied by SeaScape will ensure rapid recovery when rainfall returns.

## • SPRINKLER SYSTEM MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR •

Did you know that SeaScape can provide maintenance to your underground sprinkler system? Our technicians can help you with spring turn on, adjustments during the summer months and winterization in the fall. We are also available for repairs to sprinkler systems. Our technicians are licensed and fully trained, and we would be happy to help you with any issues you may have to keep your sprinkler system running during the summer months.

### ***Don't Have A Sprinkler System?***

***We offer complete system installation of all types of underground sprinklers.***

***Call us anytime for a FREE QUOTE!***

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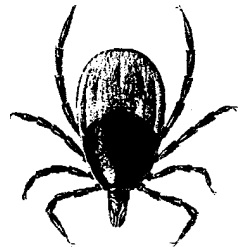
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## CALL SEASCAPE TODAY FOR MORE INFORMATION



FLEAS: Fleas live in your grass and dirt and thrive during hot, humid weather. Their bites can cause skin irritations to your family and pets, and can also transfer the tapeworm parasite.

TICKS: Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is carried by deer ticks and threatens everyone in New England. Animals such as deer and mice act as hosts and carry these ticks onto your property and close to your home where they come into contact with your family and your pets. Because ticks are very small (the size of a head of a pin), they often go undetected and are able to transfer this infection quite easily. The symptoms generally begin with a skin rash in the early stages and can develop into arthritis, heart abnormalities and nerve disorders if gone untreated. This disease is most commonly transmitted May through September.



Did you know that SeaScape offers a flea and tick control program in conjunction with your regular lawn care treatments to help protect you, your family and your pets? Our treatments help to control fleas and both brown dog ticks as well as the deer tick which transmits Lyme disease.

## SEASCAPE'S FLEA & TICK PROGRAM