

Lawn and Turf Journal

March 2018

What a season we're having!

Our summer started pretty much at Labour weekend. In December everyone was bracing themselves for the drought of the century after such a wet winter. For once the summer Met Service predictions have been pretty close with lots of tropical weather systems coming down from the north. It has been the hottest summer in the Waikato since 1946 and one of the wettest. This combination has made for huge fungi problems in everyone's gardens and lawns with ornamental plants to vegetable gardens as well as your lawns having suffered badly.

We have received a lot of feedback about lawns and turf that have suffered from the conditions. No one has escaped from insect damage, Summergrass or fungi issues in their lawn/turf this year.

Summergrass

Many people are mistaking Summergrass for Paspalum in their lawn/turf. We can control Summergrass in lawns, it is an annual grass that naturally dies at this time of the year with the cooler season coming. Summergrass is always particularly bad in newly sown Spring lawns. It is normal and can be quite disheartening for those that have invested in a new lawn. It is a short-term problem and can be controlled with regular maintenance.

Our recommendation on mowing height is critical for minimizing Summergrasses. The lower you mow, the more Summergrass you will get. The higher you mow, the more cover over the ground allows less sunlight to reach the ground, this means less Summergrass and weeds are able to germinate. A summer mowing height of 75-90mm is recommended. This is usually your highest setting on your mower.

I believe the December dry weather made the lawns stress and thin out which is why we have seen such a prevalence of this nuisance grass



Bristle grass



Digitaria Sanguinalis



Crowsfoot

Patchy Lawns

The main cause for patchy lawns is insects (Black Beetles and Grass grubs), as well as Fungi, (Brown Patch and Melting Out Disease). These diseases can come in over a space of a couple of days and do a lot of damage. The Black Beetle is very difficult to control as there are many flights a year. It is prolific in the upper North Island where the climate and soil temperatures are a lot warmer.



Brown Patch



Melting Out



Leaf Rust



Black beetle larva damage on turf

Regeneration of Lawns

We are using high Endophyte seed to help withstand these issues of insects and disease in lawns, and are constantly working with seed suppliers to pick the hardiest species for our climate.

Your lawn will recover a lot by itself once our temperatures drop and we get more constant moisture. A lot of the patchiness will recover itself. We are also working very hard to get to all our clients to assess Summer damage and schedule re-seeding where required. It has been a difficult season for our Lawn Care team trying to keep on top of the weed and fertility in the lawn without adversely affecting the lawns with the hot temperatures. Chemical and fertilizer applications is tricky through the summer months.

It will take a bit of time to turn the lawns around and we appreciate your understanding and patience, we also understand the importance of keeping costs to a minimum for our clients.

Lawn yellowing off at times of the year

Usually new lawns will yellow off quite quickly because the soil structure has been destroyed with rotary-hoeing or bobcat digger work. It takes time to get good soil structure (2 to 3 years) in the ground, furthermore, it takes time to build up the base fertility in new lawns.

With our 6 visits per year, it is normal to see the lawns start to yellow off as it would have been 8 to 9 weeks since the last fertilizer application. Whilst the lawn doesn't look its best, it is also not bad to let the plants be a little hungry and encourage them to look for food themselves by growing deeper and forming a stronger root structure. This makes for a stronger lawn in the Summer months.

Over fertilizing and watering makes for shallow rooted and high dependent lawns which require high imports of fertilizer and water to keep them looking good. Lawns should be able to look after themselves to a degree.

Irrigation Systems

It is critical that you don't over-irrigate your lawns going into Winter. At this stage we are suggesting that most systems should almost be to the stage of only every second day irrigation, with systems being off by the end of the month. Watch the weather and if we get a lot of rain, make sure you turn off your irrigation.

Lawncare Maintenance Contract Clients

We offer a basic lawncare maintenance programme. As part of this maintenance we use slow release fertilizer over the warmer months of the year giving approximately 8 to 10-week activity, during the winter months we alter our fertiliser programme with using an active fertiliser, Moss control, weed control, insect control and some Summergrass control. Where possible we are controlling Fungi when we see problems, but we are usually seeing these problems once the damage has been done. We are working on updating our Website and Facebook page to keep you informed of identification of these lawn issues. You are our eyes as we are only visiting the lawn 6 times a year. If you have any problems with your lawn please email the office@lawnandturf.co.nz with your concerns and one of our staff can have a look, photos are a huge help at our end as we can identify issues straight away. Check out our website www.lawnandturf.co.nz or our facebook page "Lawn & Turf Contracting limited" for further information.

