

## Restoring a Troubled Lawn

Is your lawn tired, stressed, patchy, or diseased? Take steps now to ensure a lush and healthy lawn.

### Healthy Soil, Healthy Lawn

The foundation of your lawn is the soil. Especially in the Willamette Valley where soils are generally heavy clay it is important to take certain steps to ensure good soil and therefore a healthy happy lawn.

- 1) **Aerate** – Aeration reduces compaction and increases drainage and water's ability to move through the soil. Use an aerator that removes a plug of soil, then rake in Soil Building Compost after aeration to fill holes and incorporate organic material into your soil.
- 2) **Beneficial Microbes** – Healthy soil is an ecosystem including beneficial bacteria and fungi. These microbes increase a plant's ability absorb water and nutrients from the soil. Compost, earthworm castings, compost tea, or Soil Activator are all options for increase beneficial microbes in your soil.

### Water and Fertilizer

Lawns need the right amounts of water and fertilizer applied at the right times. Incorrect application of fertilizer and water not only wastes money and resources but can actually increase the risk of disease.

**Water** – Lawns have relatively shallow root systems, but water still needs to reach about 4-6 inches to reach the majority of the active root system. Apply an inch of water a week, spread over two or three waterings. Deep watering encourages deep roots that can withstand drought and stress making your lawn stronger and healthier over our long dry summers. Watering too much can leach nutrients and drown your lawn, while watering too little can cause it to go dormant.

### Fertilizer

- For the Growing Season (Mid-March through Late August) a fertilizer with high nitrogen and a moderate amount of potassium provides the best results. Growing season fertilizers should have very little or no phosphorus. Depending on release pattern, feed every 4 to six weeks (4 to 6 feedings)
- For the Dormant Season (September through Mid-March) should generally have less nitrogen and more potassium and phosphorus, and should be composed of just slow-release type fertilizer. Dormant fertilizers are generally applied twice, ideally around the end September, and again in December.

Lime is an important nutrient addition to lawns. It should be added at a rate of about 25 lbs. per 1,000 square feet. It is generally applied twice a year in spring and fall. Lime is important because it makes other nutrients in the soil more available to the grass.

**Mowing** - If you raise your lawnmower blade to 3 – 4 inches above grade you can double or triple your root mass, making your lawn more resistant to drought and more able to collect available nutrients.