

Your Lawn

Do This Fall Yard Work And Reap Springtime Benefits

(NAPSA)—Lots of people think their family yards need less attention in the fall but autumn is no time to ignore your lawn and landscape.

“What you do now will determine the quality of your family yard next spring and summer,” explained Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), the international trade association representing more than 100 power equipment, engine and utility vehicle manufacturers and suppliers.

“Every gardener knows to plant bulbs in the fall but autumn is also the time to mow, aerate, mulch, trim and patch your lawn,” said Kiser. He offers five tips to help you get your yard into top shape this fall and ready for more relaxing and fun outdoor activities next year.

Keep mowing. Grass still needs regular care to stay healthy. Grass that’s too high may attract lawn-damaging field mice. Shorter grass is more resistant to diseases and traps fewer falling leaves. Cutting the grass low lets more sun reach the crown of the grass, so less leaf will turn brown in the winter. However, cutting off too much at one time can be damaging, so never trim more than a third of the grass blades off in a single cutting. Put mower blades on the lowest settings for the last two cuts of the season.

Aerate your lawn. Compressed soil hurts grass health. Aerating punches holes into the soil and lets oxygen, water and nutrients into a lawn. Use a walk-behind aerator or get an attachment to pull behind a riding mower.

Mulch your leaves. Many mowers can mulch leaves with an attachment. Since mulching with a mower can mix grass clippings with leaf particles, these nitrogen-rich grass particles and carbon-rich leaf particles will compost more quickly. Together, they return nutrients to the soil.

Trim and shore up trees and bushes. Use trimmers, chain saws or pole pruners to cut back trees, shrubs and plants. Make sure branches are safely trimmed back from overhead lines and not in danger of falling on a structure in rough weather. You may need to tie or brace limbs of upright evergreens or plants to prevent them from breaking in high winds or snow. Call a professional



Make sure your yard and equipment are properly prepared for the seasons to come.

arborist for big trees or hard-to-reach spots.

Repair bald spots. Fall is a great time to patch bald or thin spots in a lawn. The easiest way to do this is with an all-in-one lawn repair mixture (found at most garden shops and home centers). Use a garden rake or dethatcher to scratch loose the soil on the spot.

Kiser also added that it’s important to follow safety procedures whenever using outdoor power equipment. Read your owner’s manual. It will describe the individual requirements for your particular machine and provide directions on which fuels may be appropriate for your product. Fuels containing more than 10 percent ethanol should not be used unless directed in the owner’s manual.

He said, “You’ll also want to service and winterize your lawn mower, string trimmer, leaf blower and other outdoor power equipment.” And remember, most gas-fueled outdoor power equipment is warranted and designed to run on E10 (10 percent ethanol) fuel or less. There are fuel options available today that should not be used in your outdoor power equipment. Remember to “look before you pump” and make sure to drain the fuel tank before storing equipment for the winter. Safely dispose of any fuel that is more than 30 days old.

“Winterization is important for outdoor power equipment. When everything is growing again in the spring and you see how all your hard fall lawn work has paid off, the last thing you want to deal with is a malfunctioning mower,” said Kiser.

For information on safe fueling, go to www.LookBeforeYouPump.com. For tips on outdoor power equipment safety, go to www.opei.org.