

# YOUR LAWN



## The Root Of Common Lawn Problems

by *Bill Klutho*

(NAPSA)—So you've been working feverishly on your lawn—fertilizing, watering, aerating, mulching, maybe even applying lime to the lawn to neutralize the soil—but you still feel the grass is greener on your neighbor's side. Don't get frustrated. Even the best lawns have had their problems. Try these tips:

- A helpful way to pinpoint your problem areas is to conduct a soil test. Take random samples of soil from your lawn by digging down six to eight inches and removing organic matter—including grass blades, roots and stems. Mix the soil and send it to a county extension agent, university turf specialist or soil-testing lab. The lab results should identify problem areas with your lawn and offer solutions.

- If your lawn feels soft and spongy, chances are you've got thatch. Thatch can be good or bad. If you've got a thin layer, it helps prevent ground compaction and holds moisture in the soil. But too thick of a layer acts like a sheet of plastic that holds back water, nutrients and air. You can use a dethatching machine or a core aerator to pull up excess thatch and plugs of soil. If you decide to aerate, you can rake the plugs back over the lawn as a top dressing. That will start a mulching action that breaks down thatch.

- You may have noticed some bare spots in your yard. Most likely they're caused by shade, traffic or disease. If your area is well-shaded, try planting a more



**Bare spots on a lawn are usually caused by too little sun, too much traffic or disease.**

shade-tolerant variety of grass or a ground cover, or aerate the area to protect it against heavy traffic (traffic compresses the soil). To protect your grass from disease, follow good practices, such as watering infrequently but deeply, mowing your lawn often enough to cut only the top one-third of the grass plant, and using a fertilizer with a high percentage of slow-release nitrogen.

- If you've noticed your grass has a little different color, it's probably dehydrated. Signs of a dehydrated lawn include grass that's bluish-green in color, curling grass blades and foot printing. John Deere recommends watering your lawn an inch a week to help keep it green, healthy and strong.

Hopefully these common problems will help you figure out what is wrong with your lawn and facilitate a solution.

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