

# CORE AERATION GIVES YOUR LAWN A BIG BOOST



Aeration is the process of creating openings in the lawn to help air, water and nutrients move into the soil to reach the turfgrass roots, alleviate soil compaction and reduce thatch. Aeration equipment accomplishes this by coring, spiking or slicing into the soil.

Core aeration is the most effective method to aerate your lawn. It uses spoon-

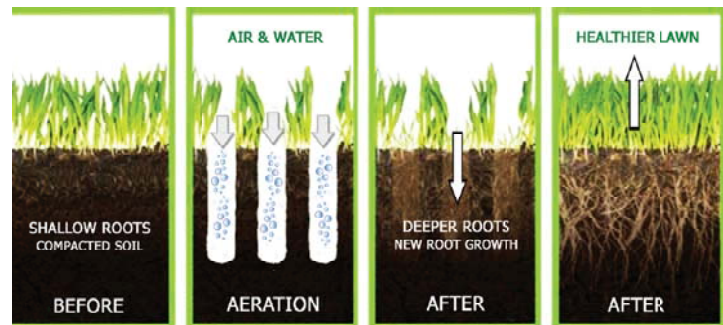
shaped or hollow tines to remove cores or plugs of soil and deposit them on the surface of the lawn. Spiking uses solid tines to create holes in the soil. Slicing uses rotating blades to cut narrow slits in the soil. Spiking and slicing move soil rather than removing it. They make little visual impact on the lawn surface and accomplish less when compared to core aeration. Annual core aeration helps create and maintain a thriving lawn.

The type of grass determines the best time to aerate. For lawns with cool-season grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue, fall is best. With cooler temperatures, you'll avoid heat stress and reduce the chance of invasion by annual weeds.

Sure you can rent aeration equipment, mark your own sprinkler heads and/or invisible dog fence.

The better solution is to hire a professional lawn care company. A professional lawn care company will mark your sprinkler heads or dog fence (usually for a small fee, time is money!), aerate the lawn, remove marking flags and even clean the plugs off of the pavement. Using the dog's collar to mark the boundaries of the invisible dog fences usually is NOT a good idea. While the collar can give you a general location of the wire, it isn't exact. You should keep at LEAST an 8 foot buffer zone on each side of your "mark". A professional lawn care company will have a wire locator that can pinpoint the wire within 1 to 2 feet. A professional lawn care company should guarantee that if they mark the sprinklers or dog fence and they happen to break something, they will fix it at no cost. Either way, mark all sprinkler heads and invisible dog fences before aeration begins to avoid costly repairs.

Allow the plugs that have been pulled to remain on the lawn. They will gradually decompose and return their nutrients to the soil. To speed this process, mow with a low-cutting blade once the plugs are dry. Make two passes, going in opposite directions, to assure an even break-up and spreading of the plugs. After mowing, water the lawn to help further dissolve the plug residue. Your lawn will look better and feel smoother underfoot.



Modified illustration: Jim Novak

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