



Spring into Natural Lawn Care.

Martin Oosterveld Ph.D.

Over the next few weeks this series will outline a complete new way to look after your lawn in a way that avoids the use of pesticides now prohibited in many communities. This week will be about spring cleanup.

When spring breaks and the surface of the ground is dry enough to work, it is time to rake the surface to break up the matting caused by the snow. Use a stiff rake to loosen up the packed down spots. Aeration is highly recommended as a way to increase the infiltration of rainwater and providing air to the bacteria in the soil. Do not attempt to remove all the thatch or dead grass, since that is the natural material that will decompose and build up organic matter. If you have a source of compost, it can be applied at this time or you can wait a few weeks when I tell you about where to get compost. No sense using all your energy in one day.

Next comes the spring fertilizer and weed control. A locally produced product called Amaizeingly Green is both a natural source of nitrogen and a weed control and replaces what previously would have been called weed and feed. This product has a fertilizer rating of 10-0-0 and it is a slow release product. The nitrogen is released over a period of about 40 days. The weed control is in the form of a natural substance that prevents weed seeds from germinating and is active for about 20 days after application.

Personally, I am planning to apply one 9 kg. Bag of Amaizeingly Green for each 1000 sq. ft. (or 100sq. m.) of lawn and I plan to apply half of it now and the other half in late summer. The more nitrogen you apply, the more you will have to mow. I just want a pleasant looking lawn and don't enjoy mowing more than once a week.

Healthy grass needs a source of P and K in addition to nitrogen. Most soils have the capacity to supply these nutrients naturally, especially early in the season. If you do a soil test you will get a recommendation on what you need to add for summer and fall applications.

If you have not tested your soil for pH, available nutrients and organic matter, it is highly recommended that you do this in the spring. That will give you a report card on the status of your soil and will allow you to prepare a plan for the season. A neutral pH in the 6.5 to 7.0 range is required for healthy bacteria to grow. Depending on your soil minerals and the history of the

fertilizer you have used, the soil may be too acid or too basic and the pH should be adjusted. There are professional services available locally who offer soil testing and they will help with interpreting the results.

The natural weed control does not kill existing established plants, so if there are some weeds you don't like, the suggestion is to remove them by pulling them. There are tools available to help in this process. Following a natural program should give you 80 to 90 % weed control in the first season and 90 to 95% control in the second year. Weeds can't compete with healthy grass.

If you have some bare spots it is recommended that you overseed. You should wait about 20 days after applying the Amaizeingly Green so the weed control component does not prevent the grass seed from germinating.

Well that's enough work for this week. Next week will feature further details on natural lawn care.

If you buy your Amaizeingly Green through any Rotarian you will contribute to our fundraising effort. See [Rotarycolligwoodsgb.org](http://Rotarycolligwoodsgb.org) or [Amaizeinglygreen.ca](http://Amaizeinglygreen.ca) for details. Make sure you quote the Rotary promotional code so we can continue to do our work in the community and around the world.

Martin Oosterveld Ph.D. is member of the Rotary Club of Collingwood South Georgian Bay.