

James's Tips: AERATING



I often get asked about Aerating and why it is such an important component of good lawn care. It is arguably the most important thing you can do for a lawn other than mow it and there are two ways of aerating a lawn - Solid Tine and Hollow Tine or Plugging.

An Aerating machine, which is very heavy, is used to force tines or metal tubes into the soil. It is about the size of a large push type lawn mower.

Solid Tine Aerating

Solid Tine aerating is equivalent of going all over your lawn with a garden fork, pushed into the soil to a depth of between one and four inches. It can be undertaken as often as you wish and is particularly beneficial in the spring and autumn.

- It enables oxygen to enter the root-ball and encourages the roots to grow healthily and down the tine holes. A deep healthy root-ball is vital if the grass above ground is going to be lush and healthy.
- Natural compaction and settlement is relieved, stimulating healthy growth. Water can more readily soak into the soil helping the lawn retain moisture and to fight the effects of a long dry spell.
- Feed is more readily absorbed and taken into the grass structure.
- Noxious gasses that may be trapped under the lawn - and which can stunt growth and cause all manner of problems - are released.
- In the autumn aeration assists natural drainage, avoiding waterlogged lawns and consequently helps combat moss colonisation.
- Solid tine aeration is best undertaken in all soil types except very heavy clay where hollow tine aerating is preferable.

James's Tips: HOLLOW TINE AERATING



- Hollow tine aerating is equivalent to pushing a hollow metal tube into the ground all over the lawn.
- When the tube is removed a plug of soil and turf is caught in the tube and expelled. Many thousands of one to three inch plugs of turf and soil are removed from the lawn. These plugs must either be removed - brushed off - or allowed to dry and then smashed up with an old hover mower. The smashed plug forming a natural fertiliser recycled over the lawn. Sometimes the punched holes are filled with sand/soil dressing - an immensely time consuming job.
- When the lawn is very heavily compacted - a walk-way for example - hollow tine aerating greatly reduces the compaction and assists in the restoration of the natural balance of the turf.
- Hollow tines must not be used if dry weather is likely because of the evaporation that occurs from the tined holes and the subsequent lawn dry out.
- The benefits of solid and hollow tine aerating are essentially the same but great care must be taken to not over aerate with the hollow tine because compaction is reduced so much that the very structure of the lawn can be severely damaged.