

# YOUR LAWN



## Common Lawn Problems

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(NAPSA)—If you've been working hard on your lawn all year—fertilizing, watering, aerating—but still can't get it right, you're not alone. Even lawn care experts experience turf troubles now and then. Here are some common problems and solutions that might help you identify your condition and lift your lawn to new heights:

**Q: I take care of my lawn, but I've got bare spots. What could be causing these?**

—Barely There

A: Most likely, bare spots are caused by shade, traffic or disease. Like any plant, grass needs sunlight; so if your area is well-shaded, try planting a more shade-tolerant variety of grass or a ground cover. Aerate the area to protect it against heavy traffic (traffic compresses the soil). To protect your grass from disease, water infrequently but deeply, keep your mower blade sharp, mow often enough to cut only the top third of the grass plant and use a fertilizer with a high percentage of slow-release nitrogen.

**Q: My lawn feels soft and spongy. What's wrong?**

—An Old Softy

A: Chances are, you've got thatch. A thin layer helps prevent ground compaction and holds moisture in the soil, but too thick a layer 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 aerate, rake the plugs back over the lawn as a top dressing. That will start a mulching action that breaks down thatch.



**A dumping utility cart can help you keep your lawn lovely.**

**Q: I thought grass was supposed to be green—but mine doesn't have as nice a color. Why?**

—Blue with Envy

A: It's probably dehydrated. Signs include bluish-green grass, curling grass blades and foot printing. Water your lawn an inch a week to help keep it green, healthy and strong.

**Q: I've been seeding, watering and fertilizing, but my lawn's still not right. Do I not have a green thumb?**

—Eight Fingers

A: Don't give up on those thumbs yet; conduct a soil test. Take random samples 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 should identify problem areas and offer solutions.

The best way to solve a problem is to prevent it. Fertilizing in the spring and fall, watering appropriately, keeping your mower maintained and following the one-third rule of mowing will help give your lawn the basics it needs for a long and healthy life.