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SPRING IS TIME TO BRING LAWNS BACK TO LIFE

(HOLMDEL, N.J.) – As spring approaches and green returns to the landscape, winter-weakened lawns need help to come back to lush, healthy life.

According to an EPA national home and garden survey, homeowners spend about \$40 billion to improve damaged lawns and maintain a lush appearance. Lawn Doctor, the nation's leading expert in lawn care, says now is the time to fertilize, control weeds and pests and check for and treat winter-related diseases.

"Maintenance is always easier and less expensive than repair, so March and April are the optimal time to ensure a beautiful summer lawn," said John Buechner, Lawn Doctor's director of technical services. "Proper fertilization and mowing, plus weed and pest control, will stop problems before they ruin your lawn for the whole season."

Lawn Doctor offers these spring lawn care tips:

Fertilization: Spring is the most vital time of the year for fertilizing because this feeding replenishes the reserves used during the dormant winter period and fuels grass' rapid growth phase. A balanced fertilizer consisting of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium is best, with 30 percent of the nitrogen slow release. Don't over-fertilize – no more than one pound of nitrogen should be applied per 1,000 square feet. The best way to prevent weeds is with a thick, healthy lawn.

Weed control: Apply a pre-emergent weed killer on lawns to prevent grassy weeds from germinating. Spring broadleaf weeds like dandelions, clovers and plantains, are best prevented by maintaining a proper mowing height and fertilization. After a mild winter, winter annual weeds that germinate in the fall, like henbit and chickweed, will be more visible and require higher levels of broadleaf weed control through herbicides.

Pest control/Disease repair: Severe winters may increase the incidence of winter diseases such as snow mold and Bermuda dead spot. Proper cultural care is important in helping your lawn recover from stress related winter diseases. Properly timed fertilizer application and mowing at the recommended height for your grass type are two items that will aid in the recovery of your lawn.

Mowing: Setting your mower at a very low height is never recommended for any lawn, even during the first mowing of the season, because it increases weeds by exposing the soil surface to sunlight and removes stored nutrients in the leaf blade. Cool weather grasses, such as bluegrass, ryegrass and fescues, should maintain a height of 2.5 to 3.5 inches. Warm season grasses, like bermuda, zoysia, St. Augustine and centipede, should be kept at 1.5 to 2.5 inches tall.

Buechner adds that spring is the perfect time to plant summer annuals and vegetables, but not for seeding lawns, which is best done in fall. In the fall, fewer weeds, more moisture and cooler temperatures allow seedlings to develop.

About Lawn Doctor

For 40 years, Lawn Doctor has led the nation's lawn care industry with innovative equipment, scientifically proven fertilization and horticultural methods and personal attention to each customer's lawn through locally owned and operated franchises. Through its comprehensive website, Lawn Doctor is a top resource for lawn care information in the country. For additional care tips or franchise information, call **(800) 4-LAWN-DR** or visit them online at www.lawndoctor.com and www.lawndoctorfranchise.com.

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