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## Lawn Doctor Fall 2023 Turf and Tree Alert

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### Fall/Winter Tips for your Lawn and Landscape

November 2, 2023

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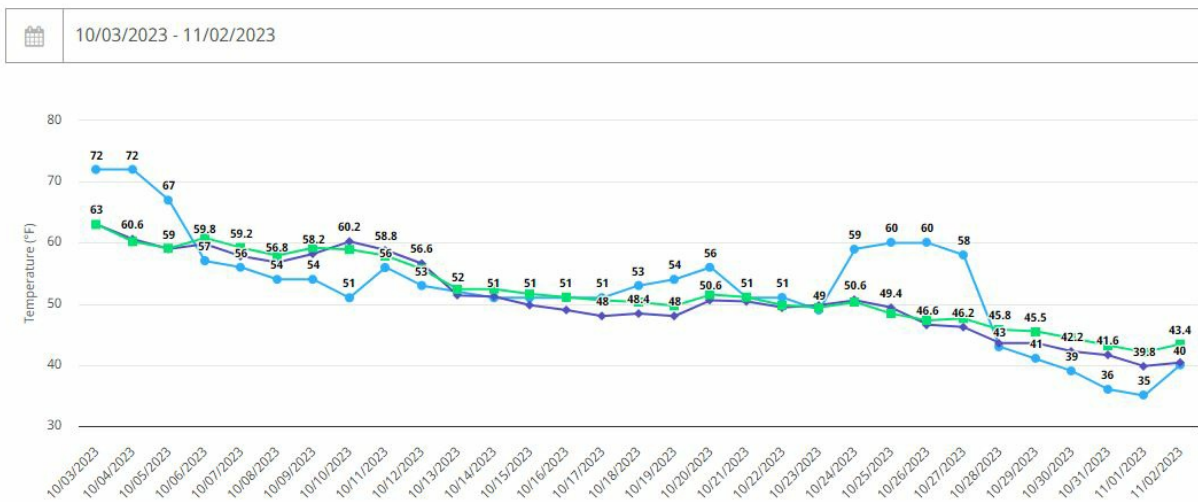
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### 2023 Summary

It has been a turbulent year of extremes with the 5th/6th driest May on record and the 1st wettest July on record. This has impacted the health of our lawns (as well as trees and shrubs).

· Like last year, our early September was very hot and dry, but October brought a fairly quick drop in air temperatures and soil temperatures. As you can see on the graph below, we were much warmer than the historic temperatures for late September and colder than the historic temperatures for early October, with more "normal" temperatures in mid-October, a brief warm-up this past week, and cooler temperatures this week. (Soil temperatures were 60 last week)



<https://www.greencastonline.com/tools/soil-temperature>

- With the cooler temperatures, we have seen significant animal digging in lawns, as raccoons, skunks, squirrels and other animals are “scrambling” to get food and get ready for winter. In many cases, this can be an indicator of grubs under the turf, but so far this year, we have found very few or no grubs in the torn up lawns. (In fact, the weather conditions earlier in the year have led to a lower than normal grub population this fall.) Unfortunately, hungry animals will dig up the turf looking for anything to eat including earthworms, beneficial insects and insect larvae. As always a grub preventative acts like an insurance policy, as it is much less expensive to prevent lawn damage at a fraction of a cost then to reseed.
- With the hot summer conditions the past few years, we have seen significant issues in some lawns with the wrong grass type in sun vs shade areas. The most common issue is fine fescue grass and poa grasses are being found in full sun areas at higher rates each year. This will cause browning / dormancy in the heat of the summer. In these cases of the wrong grass in full sun, the areas that are browning out WILL get larger each summer. Below is a photo of poa dieback. The recommended way to correct this, would be a Fall or Dormant Power Seeding.



## What can you do now?

- If you are able to do a good deep soak watering of your lawn in the next few weeks, that will help the grass plants as they go into winter dormancy. Grass is still taking up nutrients and water at this time and healthier grass will be better able to withstand the winter conditions and come out of dormancy healthier in the spring. We recommend a 45-60 minute soak per area. Watering is best done in the morning, but do not water on a day with freezing overnight air temperatures.
- Continue to mow HIGH! You will want to mow shorter (drop the mower blade by 1-2 numbers only- NOT to the shortest setting) for the LAST mowing of the year so that grass blades do not fold over under the snow (causing snow mold), BUT PLEASE wait until mid- to late-November for that shorter last mowing. The shorter last mowing should be done AFTER the grass starts to go dormant.



### Trees & Shrubs

While our focus is normally on the lawn, we do want to remind you to protect your investment in your trees and shrubs going into winter.

While your lawn goes dormant for the Winter, your evergreens (true to their name) do not go dormant.

Evergreens need stored water to make it through the Winter season. If they do not store enough water before the ground freezes to make it until Spring, they will suffer and may not survive.

Depending on rainfall in the next few weeks, it may be a good idea to do a good soak watering of your evergreens-which includes spruce and pine trees, but also landscape evergreens such as yews, boxwoods and arborvitae (anything that keeps green leaves/needles over the winter).



## "Why Winterize my Lawn?"

# (Winterizer = Late fall fertilizer)

Many people see the weather getting cold each fall and think that further treatments are a "waste," and skip the late fall service.

According to most universities, and through our 25 plus years of treating over 20,000,000 square feet worth of turf, we have seen the winterizer as one of the most important aspects of a lawn care program.

**Timing is key to this application.** Many companies and homeowners put down the "winterizer" in early to mid September, but we still consider that early fall. Most professionals agree that a winterizer needs to be put down when the grass blade growth slows, but the roots are still actively taking up nutrients, with average soil temperatures in the 30s to mid 50s. This varies depending on the fall weather (we may see some brief warm-ups or brief freezes), but generally in our area, timing is appropriate early- to mid-October through mid-December.

## "WHY?"

Late fall fertilizer is healthy for your lawn. Quickly absorbed nitrogen is stored in the newly grown fall roots. The large reserve of extra nutrients become stored carbohydrates in the plants. Since the grass has mostly stopped growing up (above the surface), it can focus all that photosynthesis and if it is performing photosynthesis it is still growing, it just may not be growing up.

This storage of energy does a few things.

1. Hardens up the grass for winter
2. Gives the plant the needed food to survive our always variable winter
3. Prepares the lawn for a green up when we finally do warm up

Every few years we have a mid winter where the temps are warm enough to keep the soil just above freezing and we still have decent sunlight with minimal snow cover. We do get calls from customers "in-the-know" that ask if we can do a secondary winterizer in late December, which we do. Their lawns look great the following spring.

A professor said years ago "If you send a lawn into winter thin and weak, guess how it will come out of winter... even more thin and weak!" The goal of our winterizer is to send you lawn into winter "Fat and Sassy" so it is full of nutrition and full of energy to come out great in the spring.

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### Don't Let Leaves Pile Up

It's great to let kids and dogs play in piles of leaves, but fallen leaves should not stay too long and especially should not be left over winter. The leaves can smother grass and provide a haven for insects, fungi spores, and diseases that can affect your grass.



- Lawns with leaves left over after winter are much more susceptible to



snow mold next spring.

- Please rake leaves regularly throughout the fall to prevent them from piling up. A leaf blower can help you remove large quantities of leaves quickly. Mulching with your mower can break up leaves into smaller fragments that protect your winter grass AND add nutrients without damaging your lawn.
- Leaf coverage is not normally an issue with our fertilizer applications. The blowing and drifting of leaves will tend to allow the *organic slow release granular* fertilizer to shake or drop to the soil. We will only find that servicing is not acceptable if leaves are extremely wet or so heavy that we cannot see the grass. This is typically when 3" of leaf coverage exist. We allow the trained & licensed technician to make the decision whether or not to reschedule the application.

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## 2024 Lawn Doctor Service Renewal/Pricing

As a reminder, your service automatically renews year to year, to make a change in service, please call our office at **608-270-6210**.

Our **2024 renewal emails & letters** have already been sent. You may lock in 2023 pricing by prepaying before 12/31/2023. Additionally, you may take a 3% prepay discount when paying online. [Click here to Log In To Your Account](#). *Due to one time promotional discounts such as 50% off the last application or 10% off the 2nd service, etc. you may see an increase as those discounts do not transfer from year to year.*

If your account was set up for Autopay in 2023. Your account will continue on Autopay for 2024.

To view your renewed 2024 program now, go to [www.lawndoctorcustomer.com](http://www.lawndoctorcustomer.com) using your account ## or

(If you want to prepay, but prefer to take care of this over the phone, please reply "PREPAY 2024" and we will give you a call or call us at **608-270-6210**)

**For 2024, we will be offering the option to LOCK-IN your 2023 prices if you confirm by Prepaying or signing up for Autopay by December 31, 2023.**

Please feel free to reach out to us with questions or concerns about your 2024 program or any issues with your service.

It is our privilege and our passion to take care of your property as if it were our own and to provide you with the customer service that you deserve.

**Thank you for trusting us with your property this year! We look forward to a great 2024 working together! As a reminder, Feel free to call, text or email us anytime throughout the year.**

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