

# **BOBBY LAWN** **NEWSLETTER**

P.O. Box 35062, London, Ontario, N5W 5Z6  
455-9333



## **CORAERATION**

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**Potential Customer:** What's this aeration thing?

**Lawn Technician:** Poking holes in your lawn sir.

**Potential Customer:** Excuse me.

**Lawn Technician:** Poking holes sir – you know, in your lawn.

**Potential Customer:** Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha You've got to be kidding. Right?

**Lawn Technician:** No sir, I'm not... Most people don't understand that aeration can be the most beneficial application done to their lawn. It's not just poking holes in the grass and leaving a mess behind. Horticulture does enter into the equation. Horticulture : the science and art of cultivating plants. A lawn is a living organism. It needs certain elements to survive just as you and I do. Some of the most important being water, food, and air. Aeration deals with the air part of the equation, and in doing so benefits and enhances the others as well as many more.

Ideal soil should be made up of 50% solids and 50% pore space. The pore space allows water and oxygen to be conducted to the grass roots and many other organisms that make up

healthy soil. If this pore space is reduced even by as little as 10% your grass will suffer adverse effects. This reduction of pore space, or compaction, occurs any time weight is distributed on your lawn. This compaction slowly reduces the amount of oxygen in the soil. Mowing the lawn, animal traffic, even rain will compact the soil beneath your grass. Do not let this in any way stop you from enjoying your yard, as healthy turf will cushion the soil from occasional activity, but repeated activity will eventually cause compaction. Compaction of the soil inhibits the root system of the grass plants by reducing the pore space. When this happens a chain reaction occurs. As the soil is compacted available oxygen is reduced limiting the ability of the plant to process nutrients. With increased compaction plants find it more and more difficult to function and are subject to increased stress resulting in greater susceptibility to drought, disease, and insects.

Herein lies the practice of turf aeration. Technically, aeration is the natural process of air being supplied into the soil. In our case aeration is the

mechanical operation of removing plugs of thatch and soil from the turf to help this process take place.

Compaction of a home lawn generally occurs in the top 1 – 2 inches (25 – 50 mm) of soil. Aerating machines remove thousands of small plugs of soil from your lawn. These plugs will be 2 – 4 inches long (25 – 100mm) resulting in holes of the same depth. With these plugs removed the remaining soil can now expand into the void, reducing compaction. With this increased pore space better oxygen, water, and nutrient movement will occur. Water and food increase growth of the plant roots which in turn provide a healthier lawn. When the plugs are removed from the soil some existing roots and stolons are also removed, stimulating the plant to produce new roots increasing the ability of the plant to take up and utilize nutrients.

As well as reducing compaction, aeration also increases the ability of the turf to absorb water. The now increased pore space allows more water, whether from irrigation or rain, to be absorbed into the soil reducing runoff and puddling. This makes any watering you do to your lawn more efficient and cost effective.

Aeration also reduces thatch build-up in your lawn. Thatch is the combined organic layer of dead and living roots, stems, and shoots that accumulate just above the soil surface. A thickness of as little as ½ inch of this

layer acts as a barrier to water and air movement into the soil below. Aeration penetrates and breaks up this layer. The plugs of thatch and soil that are distributed on the lawn surface now break down and infiltrate the thatch layer helping to decompose the remaining thatch. Newly sodded lawns already have a thatch layer and should be aerated as soon as possible after installation. This should occur when the sod is securely anchored to the soil by the roots and is in no danger of being lifted by the aerating machine. Probably no sooner than eight to ten weeks after installation. The aeration machine will leave the plugs taken from the turf on your lawn. There is no need to clean these off. Watering, mowing, and natural erosion will break these plugs apart, and they will disappear into the lawn within a short time.

Don't expect miracles from a single aeration. It is not a one time fix-all. Your lawn will benefit from regular aeration, done at least once per year. It may take several aerations over time to relieve the compaction that has built in your lawn. With repeated aeration, over time your lawn will show more vigour and be healthier than lawns that are neglected.

**Potential Customer:** So that's what aeration is.

**Lawn technician:** Yes sir.

**Customer:** Well then, sign me up.