

The ins and outs of weeds and aerification

Will aerifying in spring affect the performance of pre-emergence herbicides? When is the best time to aerify, in spring or fall? Do we need to rake and remove the cores after aerifying to reduce future weed problems? For aesthetic reasons, some of our clients insist that we remove all the cores from the lawn surface. We believe that for agronomic reasons we need to leave the cores on surface.

—MICHIGAN

Several university findings indicate that aerifying after a pre-emergence herbicide application will not have any significant adverse effect on herbicide performance and crabgrass control. This practice is being used by some lawn care professionals.

Others, however, are concerned about the possible outbreak of crabgrass from this operation when soil cores are left on the surface of lawns. The soil in the core contains weed seeds as well as beneficial microbes needed for decomposition of thatch. The soil particle containing weed seeds can filter down and may contribute to weed problems. However, I am not familiar with any published research findings indicating that this may be the case.

If the density of the aerified turfgrass is poor, then there is a good chance for weed seeds to germinate and present problems in the future. Weed seeds can remain viable in soil for many years. In this situation,

the best thing to do is to improve the vitality of existing turfgrass through proper watering and fertilizing. That will make the turf more competitive with weeds. In some situations, overseeding after aerification, or using a slicer/seeder (slit-seeder) is needed to improve the density.

Most people prefer to aerify in the fall. Agronomically, fall is preferred because at that time there are cool temperatures and adequate moisture for the turfgrass to recover. Generally, turf can be aerified about three weeks before freezing temperatures occur. There should be good growing conditions for the roots to grow after aerification.

There is no need to remove cores from the lawn surface after aerifying. Leaving the cores will allow the microbes to filter down through the thatch layer to ease thatch decomposition.

Rose of Sharons not always red

Are there any Rose of Sharon plants that do not produce a lot of baby plants around them from falling seeds? Please provide a list of Rose of Sharon plants which have different flower colors.

—OHIO

Many Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*) cultivars are available in major wholesale nurseries.

Among these, 'Diana,' 'Helene' and 'Minerva' are National Arboretum releases. They are also triploid and produce few

ROSE OF SHARON

Cultivar	Color
'Ardens'	Double violet
'Banner'	Double red, white
'Blue Bird'	Single purple
'Blushing bride'	Double pink
'Boule de feu'	Double red
'Collie mullins'	Double purple, lavender
'Diana'	Single pure white
'Hamabo'	Single pink
'Helene'	Double white
'Lucy'	Double red
'Minerva'	Single lavender, red center
'Paenyflorus'	Double pink
'Red heart'	Single white, scarlet center
'Woodbridge'	Single pink, red center

seeds. They could be used if you don't want seedlings around mother plants. Cold hardiness of these cultivars is questionable. Some may show extensive dieback during the winter. Cultivars 'Helena' and 'Diana' are slow growers.



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