

Compaction, Thatch and Moss

If they are used, all lawns will suffer compaction. Compaction means that water runs off the soil and drought conditions exist. Fine grasses are discouraged and moss is encouraged. If you're on clay it is a particular problem and your lawn is almost certainly affected. If you turn your mower around on the same spot every time you cut your lawn, or you walk across the same stretch of grass, you will create compaction.

How to recognise compaction?

- The ground feels hard
- Bare patches appear
- The soil often cracks before a real drought has set in
- Water does not drain away after rain

How do you get rid of thatch?

The solution is spiking.

- The hard-work way is with a garden fork. Insert four to five inches, wriggle around and withdraw. Repeat every few inches.
- With a large lawn it could take you years. This all sounds like hard work - don't worry, it can be quickly and easily achieved with a Westwood Lawngroomer or something similar (available to hire from your DIY store).
- After your first treatment, a programme of regular spiking is desirable and will prevent compaction arising again.
- It is also a good idea to change and vary the traffic patterns on your lawn. An obstacle such as a flowerpot placed on the lawn will quickly redirect habitual walking patterns.
- Learn to cut your grass in a different direction so you don't turn your mower on the same patch every time.

What causes moss and how to control it?

Moss comes when grasses are not competitive especially with compacted soils or in areas of shade. When allowed moss can quickly establish and become problematic. Poor surface drainage should be addressed to ensure that water can drain. The best way is to get air into the soil by forking, or spiking the turf. It's a lot easier with a machine of course. We have had fun though with our aerating shoes, which make a good present for the gardener who has everything! Make sure your hosepipe is put away when they're being worn.

Moss can be controlled by loosening with a scarifier. This is made much more effective if a moss killer has been applied first. Sulphate of Iron is the thing to use. This can be bought separately or in combination with the many branded lawn improvement treatments known as feed and moss killer. Once controlled, rake out the dead moss and then overseed with one of our seed mixtures.