

# Now is the time to repair your lawn for the next year

BY NANCY SUNDSTROM  
Special to the Record-Eagle

Many people consider summer as the time of year to roll up their sleeves to do yard work, fall is often the ideal season to get yard projects done.

Autumn is also the single best time to fertilize and sod your yard, as well as to re-seed problem areas. Cool temperatures are conducive to making seeding more successful if it's completed before frost sets in.

Fertilizing now will help promote new growth in the coming spring, thicken your lawn and replace much-needed nutrients that were taken away by summer's heat and drought .

Lawn experts in the area say there will be payoffs for any work you do in the fall to prepare for the coming year.

"Fall is a wonderful time to get the lawn in shape for next year and be a step ahead in determining the kind of lawn you want, from something out of 'Better Homes & Gardens' to some-

thing low maintenance," said Tim Lampton of McGough's in Traverse City. "With some minimal work now, for example, you'll have a lot easier time dealing with dandelions than you would next spring."

Lampton said a good starting place for fall yard work is to take a soil or sod sample in for laboratory analysis. McGough's can do the task for about \$9.50 for a basic test and the County Extension Service also offers the service. The test results can help you determine not only what problems you might have with your yard, but offer specific solutions.

"There are a lot of nationally distributed three-four-five step products that you can buy, but in northern Michigan, we have some unique soil and land conditions and it's always more effective to know exactly what you're dealing with," said Lampton. "From that point, you can get an individual program of lawn care tailored for you that will get

the kind of results you want."

Adam Orth, who is in his ninth year of owning AMO Outdoor Services in Traverse City, said there are a few basic rules of thumb to follow in the fall. One is to start by cutting the grass a little bit shorter every week. It's important to keep your grass 2-2½ inches tall throughout the fall. If it gets much longer, it will mat, leading to winter lawn disease problems such as snow mold. If you cut it shorter than that, you'll limit its ability to make and store food for growth in the spring.

As you're mowing, start putting your bagger system on, said Orth, primarily because you never know when snow will fall and begin sticking. Raking leaves is critical to paving the way for spring growth. It's a good time to trim back rose bushes and dead branches, cutting back any perennials to proper height, and clearing out dead and dying foliage and weeds. In

**Aeration pulls soil cores out of bad areas, allowing better penetration of water, air and fertilizer. If you over-seed after you aerify, the grass will come up strong, fast and with a good root system.**

general, make sure your landscape beds are free of debris, especially oak tree leaves and pine needles, and try to edge your sidewalks and driveway, so water has a place to soak down into the ground in the coming months.

Fall lawn care means making sure that lawns receive enough fall water to carry them through the long winter. Even though temperatures outside may no longer

high, it's still important to water in the autumn. Aeration pulls soil cores out of bad areas, allowing better penetration of water, air and fertilizer. If you over-seed after you aerify, the grass will come up strong, fast and with a good root system.

The main suggestion Orth makes is to get the work done, preferably spreading it out over the course of a few weeks.

"You never know when the cold weather will hit, so if you do all this during about a four-week span, you won't be overwhelmed by tackling it all at once, and you'll definitely be in good shape for the spring," said Orth. "It's your best shot for a healthy lawn, but even if we don't get snow until December, it looks clean and better, and you'll be glad you took the time for it to look good."

Finally, there's a little work to be done on your lawn care tools and appliances, such as mowers. Diane Albrecht, sales manager of Tractor Works Plus,

Inc. in Traverse City, said "rule number one" is to drain the gas out of your mower at the end of the season. Because there are no hydrocarbons in gas, it doesn't stay fresh after about one month and goes bad. For all power equipment, Albrecht recommends adding a few drops of Stabile (found nearly everywhere) in with the gas before your last uses for the year, as it helps keep the carburetor from gumming up.

"When you're done with your mower this fall, run the gas out of it or drain it out," she advised, adding that many businesses like hers will accept any leftover gas and burn it off. "Do a few more things before you put your mower away for good, like blowing debris out of the bagger so it doesn't rot and clean and sharpen up the blades. Take care of it now and it will thank you next spring."

**Nancy Sundstrom is a local freelance writer.**

# What to do with extra room as the family nest begins to empty

BY NANCY SUNDSTROM  
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Fall means back-to-school time, which also means that if you have children in your home heading off to college, there may be some opportunities to reconstruct a space or two in your home.

Those who have packed up children and seen them head out of town to continue their academic studies or make other life changes say there are several options for dealing with what has been, probably for some time now, your child's room.

The first is to leave it as it is for awhile, anticipating he or she will return to visit. Another is to pass the room along to a younger member of the family who has most likely been plotting a move into the older sibling's former domain. The other is to completely reconvert the space, something that usually happens in a more dramatic situation, such as a child marrying, leaving the state, or the like. Then, you're in the position of creating a guest bedroom, exercise room, craft room, den or other possibilities.

Interior designer Lynn Pettijohn, owner of Lynnteriors in Traverse City, is also a mother of two who sent daughter Ann, 18, off to Northwood University at Midland in September. For years, she's been advis-

**"I've had clients say that even after their child married and left the home, they still looked back on a certain room as 'theirs.'"**

Lynn Pettijohn, owner of  
Lynnteriors

ing clients about how to work with rooms newly vacated when their children's lives change, and now it's her turn.

"I've had clients who will not alter a room for years, feeling that if they change it, the child won't feel welcomed back and that's often the case, especially if it's the first time someone in the house has left," said Pettijohn. "Most often, people will need to make some use of that bedroom, and if you're short of space or there are other children, you need to make some hard decisions about how it's going to be used and who will be using it."

If the room is going to be handed off to another sibling, the redecorating process is somewhat less complicated and focused on

the usual aspects of that task, said Pettijohn. If the child who has left still plans on returning and staying there occasionally, but you want to have some options for using the space when they're away, she says there are some basic guidelines to follow.

"Chances are that your child has taken quite a bit out of the room already, but review what's in the room and determine what you'll be using and what you won't," said Pettijohn. "Ask them to assist you in cleaning and packing up the collections of photographs, trivia and posters, and store them somewhere, along with all the extra clothes, stuffed animals, etc. Once you've removed the clutter, packed up, and, hopefully, disposed of some things, you can start with a clean visual and begin your new decorating plan."

Most prefer to use the room as some sort of guest room, said Pettijohn, meaning that you may want to replace some furniture, neutralize colors, clear out

drawers and closet space, or freshen up the look of the room with a coat of paint or wallpaper, or accessories like new area rugs or curtains. If in doubt about what kind of choices to make, consult a designer or someone's tastes whom you respect, she adds.

In Pettijohn's case, son Jack, 16, has been eyeing his older sister's room since they knew she was heading to college, but Ann hasn't wanted to completely vacate the space. Since September, there's been more than a bit of negotiation going on, she said, with the compromise being that Jack is still keeping his clothes and sleeping in his room, but using Ann's room as more of a study and TV room.

"Little by little, he's moving in," said Pettijohn with a laugh, "but Ann still sees it as her space and doesn't want to be thrown out just yet. You have to have some room for discussion and give-and-take, and in most cases, that isn't always easy. I've had clients say that even after their child mar-

ried and left the home, they still looked back on a certain room as 'theirs.' You can understand that. I don't think any parent ever wants their child to feel displaced."

For Ede and Jim Meyer, who have lived on South Lake Leelanau for the past 30 years, the movement out of the house with their five children created a domino effect, something that was made a bit easier by the fact that the Meyers have a guest house that all of the kids used for their own at one point or another.

Things have come full circle, though, said Ede, who taught dance in the area for many years.

All but one of the Meyer children have returned to the Traverse City area. While they're not living at home with their parents, they have visited frequently over the years, and at least two of the three grandchildren have a room that is theirs.

Meyer said that as she looks back on all the room reassignments that took

place, it's like keeping a scorecard.

"Everytime someone left for school or took a job someplace else, we'd move someone into a different room and redecorate as they saw fit, and it wasn't until they all left and we were empty nesters that Jim and I decided we were finally going to convert a few of the rooms just for us," said Ede.

"One became an office for Jim, another is for the two grandsons who live here, and then we have guest rooms, but it's been something to keep up with. We still have things that belong to the kids here and probably always will, but we've managed to claim more of the space for ourselves," concluded Ede. "They've laughed about how we tried to edge them out of the house, but they knew that wasn't really the case. We always want this to feel like home, a place they can always return to."



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