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“Your Home Turf Advantage”

CARING FOR OUR LAWN OVER THE WINTER

YES... believe it or not...

“Hey, wait a minute... there’s snow on the ground in the winter and we can’t even see our grass!”

OR... If you haven’t got snow yet... It’ll be here soon enough... Ready or not... It’s coming!

Here’s what we mean by that by way of a few questions frequently asked by our clients...

IS IT OKAY TO WALK ON YOUR GRASS DURING THE WINTER?



We sometimes encounter those unusual Octobers and Novembers... You know the ones...where we’re surprised that we don’t yet have any snow on the ground that’s here to stay for the season. Or on the other hand, it surprises us and arrives earlier than normal and we get a sudden huge snowfall the week after we were so grateful for the incredibly nice Autumn weather. Yah, we’ve had some unusual years like this before but these are typically exceptions to what’s normal... unless of course, our normal is changing as the climate surely seems to be in the last few years. Time will tell.

Actually, the weather prognosticators have revised their early predictions and are now saying that we’re in for a lot more snow and colder temps than normal for this winter season... We’ll see what happens this year, won’t we?

Any warmer than normal weather we experience in the late fall tends to fool some of us... Believe it or not, we’ve even had a few clients call us a wee bit on the too late side... (given that snow is being forecast to start next week). They’re asking if we might still be able to drop by last minute and do some lawn care for them.

Unfortunately, we’re finished with most of those final services for our clients already. We’re quickly winding down to the last remaining bookings yet to be completed... It’s a bit too late for taking on any new ones, needless to say.

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Not only are we in the process of storing away some of our lawn care equipment for the season but we're already in the process of switching over to snow removal mode for our local Camrose clients. Normally, by the time we reach the end of October, we've already hired our winter snow removal crew for our Camrose area and our snow removal equipment is all prepped and ready for any snow that befalls the city.

I say all of that to preface what I'm now going to mention... Here's something most clients don't normally think about, but it IS important.

Here's the big question some of you have been asking —

ONCE THE FROST HAS ARRIVED AND THE GROUND FREEZES AND OUR GRASS DOES ITS DORMANCY THING OVER THE WINTER, IS IS OKAY TO WALK ON IT?

In a word, the answer would be a NO. [More about that shortly]

Lawn care experts would normally warn against walking on your grass in winter for a number of reasons.

Of course, in our Central Alberta region walking on one's lawn may be a moot point simply due to the depth of accumulating snow and snow banks, etc., we're known to experience. But what I'm referring to in this question pertains more to at the beginning of winter just as frosts are arriving and the ground is freezing and snow is starting to fall here and there. The same concerns would be for once we're towards the end of winter and the snow is melting quite a bit but the ground and the grass may still be frozen.

Believe it or not, lawns actually do get some benefit from winter snow (which sometimes can be too much) just like they do from summer sun (which sometimes can likewise be too much). However, at this time of year grass is especially fragile, so it's a good idea to tread lightly if for whatever reason you do have to walk on your snow-covered lawn.

The Bottom-Line is —

*** TOO MUCH TRAFFIC, OR LOTS OF IT ON THE SAME WELL-WORN PATH, AT ANY TIME OF THE YEAR, CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT YOUR LAWN — BUT DURING THE WINTER, IT CAN DAMAGE FROZEN GRASS BLADES.**

Water molecules that are frozen within the grass blades and expanded, and then people applying pressure by walking on it, can cause cellular damage to the grass. The blades can literally break and those, indeed, may not recover.

That's going to affect how your lawn will look come spring and how quickly it may start growing again as warmer temperatures arise and everything starts greening up again.

So, a secondary but equally important related question is...

WHAT CAN WE DO TO LOOK AFTER OUR LAWN WHEN THE MERCURY DROPS?

Is it simply time to go in the house and hibernate? Are we to just *batten down the hatches*, put on the extra sweater and hope we and our lawns survive the frigid winter temps again? Actually, the last couple winters we did get some super frigid -40's C and even colder windchill temps... That's not good for people nor pets, nor our lawns either.

Well, there are some common-sense things we all should be mindful of even in the winter. We take lawn care very seriously regardless of what season we're in.

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Firstly, understand that though lawns don't require as much watering in the fall time, you do not want to dry them out/leaving them "thirsty" prior to the winter arriving. It's the same as with proactively prepping your trees and shrubs for the winter. You want to ensure they've had some serious watering before the frost and snowfalls start arriving. **You want to be sure both your lawns and your trees and shrubs have adequate water reserves in preparation for the winter.**

Plus a bit of a side benefit, too, is... if that watering has come a little later in the day, the normal evaporation process will mean the temperature around the blades is apt to be slightly warmer. And when the temperature drops as it gets into the evening, the watered grass may not actually freeze enough for the water molecules to expand and cause damage.

Again, this refers mostly to those frosty days and nights prior to any regular snowfalls arriving. But once the snow's on the ground, and it's that much colder, that's a whole different degree then... Winter's arrived and your grass has progressively already, become more dormant.

But let's backup the timeline a bit, first, before we carry on...

As a valued client of ours, we hope that as many of you as possible, had already taken advantage of some of our Fall services this past couple months. If not, we recommend you do so for next year...

So by way of a reminder, it's always wise to:

CONSIDER A FALL FERTILIZER & WEED CONTROL APPLICATION BEFORE WINTER ARRIVES —

I mention this because it's always a significant help to your lawn. The time to have done that, ideally, is Late August through Late September —

Of course, we're in Late October now, but some weeks earlier was the best time to fertilize your lawn before temperatures dip too much and it's still well ahead of the first frost. Chances are your lawn may still even be somewhat in recovery mode from any potential previous drought conditions you may have experienced during the summer, so you want to give your grass as much time as possible to absorb those nutrients in the fertilizer and put them to work before the frost and snow are upon us.

In fact, a Fall Fertilizer & Weed Control application may indeed be one of the most important of the year.

Not only will the herbicide component of our spray catch any remaining broadleaf weeds that might have arisen later in the summer, but the fertilizer component of our spray would further strengthen and prepare your lawn for the winter season ahead.

We're always mindful of the particulars of our region, our typical soil conditions, type of cool season grasses most lawns here are comprised of, and of course, the typical climate in store for us for our normal winters.

- Unlike some retail-store-bought fertilizers, we always adjust our fall NPK ratios [nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K)] in our liquid fertilizer to focus more on the P and the K. This offers support for strong root growth and resilience as well as providing ongoing disease resistance, and contributing to overall grass health, providing those essential nutrients that are needed in its reserves throughout the winter.
- In regions like ours where we can typically get a lot of snow during the winter, we optimize our NPK ratios to lower the nitrogen as we're not wanting to cause increased tender new grass growth very late in the fall time that could end up damaged over winter... But we do increase the phosphorus and potassium ratios.

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That being said, there's nothing wrong with seeding new lawn or over-seeding in late August or early September if the lawn and weather conditions are still favourable and there's still time for it to grow well enough so that you're hopefully able to mow it at least once yet before the winter arrives. I'm referring above to any late fall application that's too close to when the snow starts falling.

- The “*push*” of phosphorus will stimulate root growth through September, October and into November. Having strong roots in your grass will keep your lawn healthy through the typical stresses of changing weather and seasons. Building and strengthening strong and especially deep roots is definitely going to contribute to a better lawn next spring.
- Potassium is particularly beneficial, too. It aids in better water and nutrient uptake while helping synthesize proteins and starches. It also helps the grass build thicker cell walls and strengthens it so it can withstand various stresses such as drought, heat, and any diseases during the warmer season, and thereafter the coming cold of winter. It essentially boosts the grass's tolerance to freezing temperatures and enhances grass root systems.

ALSO CONSIDER A FALL ENRICH SOIL ENHANCER APPLICATION BEFORE WINTER ARRIVES —

This is ideal for proactively *winterizing* your lawn with respect to a super-nutrient boost. We highly recommend that if you haven't already been taking advantage of Enrich applications every year, be sure, next year, to consider getting at the very least, our Fall application of our Enrich Soil Enhancer in preparation for the colder season ahead.

Our clients that do this as a normal part of their lawn care regimen, are our best testimony for how effective our Enrich Soil Enhancer applications are. They're typically the ones whose lawns come early Spring are already, proactively, well on their way to getting that great start for the new growing season.

So... the more of that you can get into your lawn before winter, the better. There's NEVER too much of Enrich that you can apply to your lawn at anytime throughout the year.

- Think of Enrich as a unique additional all-natural soil additive or nutrient supplement. It's not meant by any means to replace a routine regimen of fertilizer and weed control herbicide, as these are two totally different products, but to add to it and further enhance your lawn's quality with another vital highly beneficial lawn care spray program.
- Just as its name implies, it's going to enrich the soil beneath your grass. In preparation for winter it truly helps increase your turf's uptake of nutrients and enables more effective and efficient assimilation and absorption of the nutrients.
- It also helps improve the soil structure and creates a healthier root system for your grass. This in turn, will contribute to a lush, thicker lawn, come spring, which will feel better on your feet, yet is robust.
- Enrich's seemingly *hidden power* is that it especially helps struggling or worn grass bounce back and restore very quickly even after repeated usage or severe foot traffic during the previous summer months.

Okay, back to our original question... So... NO, it is NOT okay to walk on your grass during the winter.

Consider the following... I briefly touched on this earlier, but I'll elaborate with a bit more detail now —

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Fragile Grass Blades Can Only Take So Much:

- During the summer, grass blades have an elasticity that enables them to handle normal footstep pressure. The grass will bend but not break when you walk on a green lawn during a normal growing season. That's why most lawns can handle the occasional lawn party or family playing lawn games on it or whatever.
- However, when temperatures plummet as winter approaches, the blades of grass lose their previous elasticity. They are much more likely to snap when walked over, especially once the frost has arrived and frigid temperatures are heralding the soon coming winter snow. And when they do, they will turn browner than the surrounding grass. If that occurs, there's not a whole lot you can do about the problem until your lawn comes out of dormancy the following spring. But even then, these patches may struggle to grow or turn green as quickly as the surrounding grass. It could even take some weeks or months for these tracks to blend in with the rest of the lawn, so this is a risk you'll want to be aware of.
- The reality is, that due to increasingly colder temperatures, grass blades are far less flexible in winter. It's one thing if the ground is clearly frozen and there's perhaps very little to no snow on it yet... but even with that, walking on even a lighter snow cover can still cause damage to a lawn. Indeed, this damage may be noticeable long after the snow melts and spring arrives.
- Later in the season, during warmer spells when some of that snow begins to melt, compacted snow from previous heavy winter boot prints will often remain behind in the shape of reverse footprints. Because these patches of snow are obviously much denser than the surrounding snow, they'll take longer to melt. Indeed, snow compacted by footsteps can turn to ice. Snowfall may provide an element of insulated protection for the dormant grass underneath, but heavier, colder ice can potentially wreak havoc on any compacted grass underneath it.
- As the weather gets warmer, the frozen footsteps may be the only snow still remaining on your lawn. While any exposed grass may be attempting to soak up the sun's rays, the blades under these snowy tracks stay hidden. The grass below will become smothered, and it could take weeks for the tracks to eventually disappear. When they do, there is also a risk that the grass below may have developed a fungus called *snow mold*.

This can potentially be severe enough to kill the crown and roots of the grass. It's evidenced by patches of matted-down crusty, discoloured grass, either as bleached or scalded-looking, grayish-white or straw-colored/almost brownish-colored patches, sometimes with a whitish-pinkish web-like coating. In cases like this, once the growing season returns, those infected patches of grass may still be visibly annoying.

- The best prevention for snow mold is to avoid these instances of frozen footsteps, and generally-speaking, to avoid heaping up large heavy piles of snow along walkways and driveways thereby creating large heavy snowbanks. Ideally, if at all possible, try to throw it abroad, spreading it around a bit more than only in huge snowbanks immediately adjacent to your sidewalks or driveway.
- So yes, with regards to our snow footprint issue, you want to try to prevent snow compaction and restrict the amount of walking on the turf in the winter months as much as possible.

What May Our Winter Boots Be Carrying On Them?

- Another big reason for not walking over your snowy yard is due to what you might unknowingly carry with you. By that I mean, did you spread any salt or ice melt on your sidewalk or driveway?
- Be mindful that some of those products are not grass-friendly, and stepping your feet off those concrete and asphalt paths and onto your lawn may also transport those harsh salts and chemicals, thereby possibly damaging and even killing the grass underneath if repeated and in sufficient quantity.

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Is It Okay If I Shovel A Path Across My Lawn for Family and Pets?

- I understand... You have to get from here to over there and sometimes the most direct path is what you prefer, especially if it's very cold or blizzardy outside... Meaning "the shortest distance between two points is a straight line"... instead of the long way around. Hey, we totally understand... Maybe you want that handy shortcut to get to your vehicle or mailbox, or your garbage cans in the backyard, but it's important to resist the temptation of walking on frosted or snowy grass.
- Or perhaps your dog needs some place to do its business, right? So wouldn't it be okay to shovel the snow off a pathway or set aside a portion of the lawn for your dog?

These are both legitimate concerns and questions but NO... NOT A GREAT IDEA!

- WHY? Suddenly removing blankets of snow or massive snow banks can expose your lawn (that was managing okay before with its somewhat insulative snow cover) to now experience more-direct freezing elements it would definitely struggle to deal with.
- I might further caution you, too... How much will the act of shovelling a pathway potentially scour or tear up your lawn's surface, too? Those grass blades are likely to break under such activity.
- All that extra foot and/or paw traffic also adds to the potential damage. It can actually make it even worse since the wear and tear is focused on the pathway across your lawn or confined to a very small area for your dog (let alone the damage that will DEFINITELY happen by any dog pee or neglected frozen dog droppings left on the grass through the winter).

* For all the above reasons, it's best just to leave the snow where it falls... **We recommend that you DO NOT create any shortcuts across your lawn that you'll possibly regret and be paying for next spring in struggling grass or dead areas.** It's of course your choice, but it may simply not be worth it.

* That being said, some of our clients who have dogs (and we have many pet-lovers out there), have designated a specific set aside area as a dog-run or fenced-in-pen where that's their dog's free range domain. That becomes their dog's security blanket, you might say, too, as the dog always knows where it can go... and dogs like to return to their familiar spots. It actually obliges some good habits and both you and your dog are apt to be more happy for it. They clear an area of the lawn with a snowblower (or perhaps even a gravelled-in area) for their dog to run around in and do its business. They aren't concerned about any nicely maintained lawn there, as it's understandably going to get some serious usage. But we'd still say... please don't leave any frozen dog droppings even in their set aside dog run area. For any of us who've had dogs we all know what a mess than can be once the snow is gone and everything warms up... Right?



In that regard, with their own special area, their dog at any time of the year does not cause any normally otherwise-occurring dog spots or deterioration on the rest of their lawn... Needless to say, that saves these clients a lot of lawn repair time and potential remedial costs, too.

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And one last thing —

Hey, despite everything I've mentioned above, that's not to say that come winter time you and your family can't have any fun outside in the snow.

If your children want to build snowmen, snow forts or igloos, you could always pick an area that's out of the way, so any damage that does occur is limited to a place that won't be seen very often.

Winter for some is the time to stay inside till the warmer weather returns. And for others, we want to still be outside regardless... We just dress for it, right? It's each to their own...

But we just wanted to pass on some good common-sense advice that we believe would be highly beneficial to you and your family.

***** I guess what we're also saying is, even when you can't see the lawn, there are things you can do to ensure that once you can see it again, it'll green up fast in the spring and become as healthy and lush as you'd like it to be.**

All the best to you for this upcoming winter season!

Scott's Quality Lawn Care Team

***** SPECIAL NOTE *****

We love helping our clients have great-looking lawns! Of course, we always welcome your inquiries, but we also want to help educate you, too. So many of you have told us how much you appreciate the articles we make available to you.

If there are any questions you may have about your lawn or any challenges or problems you may occasionally encounter with your lawn, don't hesitate to give us a call. As with the above info article you've just read, we also have other highly beneficial lawn care articles, too...

Here are some we've created to support you with your lawn care efforts. They can help you identify any problems as well as offer some possible solutions for some of those occasional challenges lawns can encounter.

These info articles are not meant to be one-time definitive cures for whatever might ail your lawn. We all wish it was only that simple... But, there are no magic "spray this once and your lawn will be perfect thereafter" solutions... Unfortunately, those don't really exist, as much as we might all like them to. However, there are many things you can do to get your lawn in great shape and keep it that way. We encourage you to glean what you can from any of the following articles that may interest you. And for what you're not sure about, give us a call, let's talk about it, and we'll do what we can to help you.

You may reach us at 780-678-6450 if you'd like to receive any of these via email. It would be our pleasure to do our part to help you "make your lawn the envy of your neighbours"...

...See more on next page...

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From Our **“PROACTIVE LAWN CARE”** Series Of Articles —

7 Steps To A Great Lawn

Caring For Our Lawn Over The Winter

Proactively Preparing Your Lawn For Drought Conditions

From Our **“WHAT YOU’RE NOT TOLD”** Series Of Articles —

What You’re Not Told About All-Natural & Organic Lawn Care Alternatives

What You’re Not Told About Bats & Their Guano

From Our **“WHY?”** Series Of Articles —

Why Is My Grass So Thin?

Why Dead Spots On My Lawn?

Why Am I Getting Mushrooms In My Lawn?

Why Are The Pine Needles Killing My Grass?

From Our **“HOW TO GET RID OF...”** Series Of Articles —

How To Get Rid of Ants

How To Get Rid of Dew Worms

How To Get Rid of Fairy Rings

How To Get Rid of Quackgrass

How To Get Rid of Thistles

From Our **“DAMAGE BY DOGS & OTHER CRITTERS”** Series of Articles —

Fixing & Preventing Dog Spots

Damage Caused by Voles

From Our **“SEEDING LAWNS”** Series Of Articles —

Grass Seeding For New Lawns

Overseeding For Existing Lawns

From Our **“DIY”** Series Of Articles —

DIY_Alternate Ways To Remove Weeds In Gravel Areas

From Our **“COMMON LAWN FUNGAL DISEASES”** Series Of Articles —

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases (Compendium Of All Common Ones)

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_The Usual Causes

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Snow Mold

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Leaf Spot & Melting Out

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Ascochyta Turf Leaf Blight

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Brown Patch

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Summer Patch

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Pythium Blight

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Red Thread

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Rust Diseases

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Powdery Mildew

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Dollar Spot

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Fairy Ring

...See more on next page...

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INFORMATION ON OUR FIVE PRIMARY LAWN CARE SERVICES —

FERTILIZER & WEED CONTROL:

Our Fertilization & Weed Control Program
Possible Reasons For Still Having Weeds
Ten Reasons Our Program is Different

ENRICH SOIL ENHANCER:

Our Enrich Soil Enhancer Program
Different Soil Types Have Different pH Levels

WEEKLY MOWING:

How The Weekly Lawn Mowing Works
Our Quality Control Program
Ten Reasons We Are Different

CORE AERATION:

Why Aerate Your Lawn?

POWER RAKING:

Why Power-Rake Your Lawn?

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