



# Garden Clippings



*Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 96*

## Thatch in Lawns

### The Thatch Problem

In lawns, thatch is the buildup of cut grass that is not picked up by the mower or raked up after mowing. If your lawn is off-colour and thinning and you cannot see bare ground between the plants but instead see matted, fibrous material, it is due to thatch.

Removing thatch is done to create a healthier, better-looking lawn. Since thatch acts as a barrier to water, nutrients and air, it needs to be removed to ensure a healthy lawn.

### Thatch Removal

The removal of thatch is called dethatching. It is generally done in the spring or fall, and fertilizer is then applied to the lawn.

Dethatching involves the removal of the matted layer of dead and decaying plant material between growing grass and the soil.

Dethatching can be done either by hand, with the help of specialized tools such as a dethatching rake, which is a sharp-tined rake that rips the thatch out of your lawn, or by a power dethatching mower, which is often called a vertical mower. This 7-horsepower dethatcher has, on the bottom, rotary tines, which can make the job a lot easier.

When the task is done, the lawn will not look attractive; it's supposed to look that way. All the debris must be raked up, and the lawn must be fed and watered. After three or four weeks, the lawn will look fresher than ever.

### Thatch Prevention

Thatch is an indication that dead plant stems and roots are not being broken down as quickly as new growth occurs. Avoid excessive fertilizing and watering as these may contribute to thatch build-up. Products containing natural enzymes and micro-nutrients can be added to the soil to help the natural breakdown of thatch.

### Effect of Thatch on the Lawn

Too much thatch is not good for the lawn. If left untreated, thatch can develop into a hard-to-penetrate, disease-harboring layer between the grass and the soil.

Thatch sounds scarier than it is, but it can be removed quickly and easily using a hand rake. Once the initial thatch layer is removed, future problems can be avoided by fertilizing, watering and mowing properly.

### A Renewed Lawn

If you want your lawn to look outstanding this season, spend some time with a rake, or contact a landscape or lawn-care company for an estimate. You will not be disappointed when your lawn is the greenest lawn in the neighbourhood.

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