

# garden



By Roger Myers

Roger Myers is the President and Founder of American Beauty Landscaping. Established in 1979, ABL is the Valley's industry leader with more than 100 national, state and local awards to its landscape design and build credit.

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## *Are You Loving Your Lawn?*



Another winter is all but gone (hopefully!) and it is actually exciting to hear the sounds of mowers again, cutting fresh turf for the first time.

Even if you hate yard work, you gotta admit, Spring is just the greatest time of year, as the bright colors, sounds, and smells of plants replace the stark quiet and solitude of winter white, dirty grays, bare

trees, and no flowers or bees.

So too is your lawn becoming green once again, signaling that growth has begun, and soon you'll be cranking up the mower (or calling us!) to relieve your burden.

However, acquiring (and keeping) a "terrific turf" is not always easy. Some questions commonly asked are: "Why is it that some lawns always seem to be in better shape than my own?" "Why do I have bald spots under my trees?" "Why does my lawn appear to be brown on top, even with plenty of rain?" "Should I roll my lawn every year?" These are the commonly asked questions; here are the solutions .

Lawns, like all other living plants and animals, have a period of youth, middle age and "retirement"! If you are in your retirement years, and have never replaced your lawn, chances are, it's time to do so.

As your turf ages, many other types of turf seed, weeds and crab-grass invade your lawn and begin to spread. These "foreign" grasses may not match your existing lawn and different colors and texture will appear. Poa-Anna is a common invasive grass which does well in moist conditions, but easily dries out in the summer. The results are that



your once beautiful homogenous stand of desirable Blue Grass, etc. has now degraded to an assortment of various grasses, looking nothing like the lawn you once admired.

Your best solution will be to remove it, and start over, or at least over seed it annually, after aeration, or de-thatching. This will keep your lawn "youthful", and not ready for "retirement"! Again, over the years, your small trees which you planted 15-20 years ago are now covering half your yard with dense shade. Try as you might, your lawn will not grow there. Even if you over seed with a shade-tolerant seed, it still will not fill in. You are frustrated because it just doesn't look as good as it once did.

Here are a couple suggestions: If you desire thick green turf, more than you value your shade trees, then cut them down. A less radical, and less expensive option: Have a professional thin out your trees on top, and then cut off the lower branches. This will allow filtered light to reach your turf allowing it to grow. Lastly, you may just spread mulch, or plant a ground cover beneath your trees. You may just find that the additional color and texture is quite attractive!

If your lawn appears to be white or brown on top; observe the blades of grass up close. If they are frayed and not cut cleanly, it's an indication that your mower blades need to be sharpened. I recommend that you sharpen your blades monthly to maintain a good quality turf.

Many folks still like to roll their lawn. I think it's because our dad's did! If you can avoid it-don't do it! A common problem in this region is heavy clay soils. As a matter of fact, we have the distinction of having a soil type named after Canfield - "CANFIELD CLAY"!! If you have it-you know it - it gets so hard when it dries - it actually forms crevices! By rolling this soil, you are in essence creating a concrete like condition that is detrimental to turf-growth. Avoid it! The best thing to do is have it airified; the process is called core-aeration. It will enhance it's growth by allowing air, water, and nutrients to get through.

Good Luck. See you again next month!