

****ASK THE TAFE TEAM****

**With TAFE Queensland South West Horticulture Teacher, Paul Luck
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Question: *How do I renovate my turf to get it ready for Spring?*

Answer: Spring turf renovation involves a series of operations that link together in sequence and complement one another. These include:

- 1) Mowing the yard and preparing surfaces for renovation
- 2) Scarification and removal of unwanted debris
- 3) Aeration, decompaction of soil, improving oxygen and carbon dioxide exchange in soil
- 4) Top dressing, restoring levels and improving surface drainage
- 5) Overseeding, restoring grass populations
- 6) Fertilising, providing nutrients for grass growth
- 7) Watering and/or irrigation

After a weed and mow, scarification removes most of the dead and old grass (and is like pruning a hedge because it stimulates new growth in the plant). If you don't want to hire a scarifier, you can get similar result by either lowering your mower height setting or use a nail rake to vigorously pulling up the old growth. This old and dead grass is called thatch; it makes a great addition to your compost bin. The lawn will look very messy and shaggy after scarification, but fear not it will benefit greatly and the appearance will quickly improve.

Aeration is the next critical step, and you can hire coring machines as well if you have a large area to cover. Otherwise a garden fork will do the job. Just don't forget to check for underground services! Drive the fork into the topsoil to at least 75mm and move it back and forward to loosen the soil. This will reduce any compaction and allow greater oxygen flow through the soil.

Now that you have a lawn full of holes, take the next step and top-dress over the holes. This can improve soil quality and water and fertiliser penetration. Top-dressing will also address any uneven levels that you may have by filling small depressions. The best material to use for top-dressing is a sandy loam, but make sure that you don't introduce weeds. Washed pit sand is an excellent alternative that the professionals often use. You can get it from your local landscape yard.

At this point you could over-sow with grass seed to help fill in areas with no lawn. Make sure that the seed will grow in our climate as many boxed products have cool climate grass seeds in them.

Now it's time to fertilise to give your newly pruned and dressed lawn a good feed. Slow release fertilisers are a useful option that you can get either at the local landscape yard or hardware store. Spread them evenly for the best results.

Finally, don't forget to water in. Once you have completed all of the prior steps, give the lawn a good drink. This will allow the top-dressing to settle in and the fertiliser to get to the roots.

Follow these steps and your lawn should be ready for a great growing season.

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Disclaimer: The comments provided in this article are general in nature only and are not a substitute for professional advice. The author accepts no responsibility for any action taken by a reader in relation to this article.

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