

Renovation time – as seen on TV!



To the casual TV viewer, it seems one can't turn on the set without seeing glossy tradespeople with perfect teeth renovating houses for tool-challenged owners, gleefully turning once ordinary backyards into gardens of Babylon and sunless flats into Mediterranean villas. All with just a jigsaw, a hammer and a coat of paint – amazing!

Outside in the real world, home renovation survivors, who began with just wanting to re-turf the backyard but somehow ended up with a new pool cabana with stainless steel barbecue and swim-through bar, say they would never undertake such foolishness again.

Thankfully, turf renovation in our industry is in the hands of professionals. Following another hot, dry summer, autumn/spring renovation is a key time to minimise the stresses that greens and turf surfaces will be placed under this coming summer.

The term 'summer decline' is regarded as a threat in reducing turf quality throughout the hotter months. This is due primarily to a number of negative interactions, which on their own are minor, but together can result in loss of turf cover, and a loss of hair for turf managers.

For example, low numbers of parasitic nematodes during summer in itself is probably not going to have any major impact on turf health. Put this together with the presence of disease, high temperatures and humidity, moisture stress, heavy play and close mowing, and you have a dynamic recipe for turf decline due to weakened root, rhizome and stolon systems.

Here are a few reminders to help you when renovating this season in preparation for the hot, dry months ahead. We have also included how TV-renovators might approach the task.

Soil testing

A soil test is the best initial step to determine the needs of the turf. It tells you what level of nutrients is currently in the soil and what may be lacking. The results will also

indicate if pH adjustments are necessary. For guidance on these adjustments, consult the relevant Scotts technical bulletin or ask your distributor. A TV-renovator wouldn't test the soil – the soil would win.

Pre-renovation feeding

Renovation rejuvenates turf to produce smooth, consistent playing surfaces. The results of the soil test will indicate the fertiliser required for promoting growth and balancing soil chemistry. A Scotts product specifically designed for pre-renovation feeding is Sierraform Supergreens. It breaks couch dormancy and, for bent grass greens, supplies a solid NPK plus Mn and Fe formulation prior to renovation. Of course, a TV-renovator wouldn't feed before renovating – he wants it to look as bad as possible for the show's 'before' shots.

Deep aeration

Surface hardness and compaction have been exacerbated by our lengthy drought conditions. Aeration is recommended to relieve compacted soil layers and improve moisture and air availability. A TV-renovator would have the job done between ad breaks using just a weeding fork.

Renovation feeding

With the turf surface open, this is an excellent time to apply a Scotts fertiliser from our controlled release range. Choose from Sierrablend Mini Super K Greens with high K to strengthen cell walls prior to the onset of hot weather and environmental stress, or Sierraform Greens 18-4-15 balanced NPK that provides healthy growth for recovery following renovation. These are best applied to the soil surface after top dressing. A TV-renovator thinks top dressing is not wearing pants.



More About...Soil pH

Soil pH is a measure of the hydrogen ion concentration in the soil. An acid soil has a greater concentration of hydrogen (H⁺) ions than an alkaline soil (Hydroxyl [OH⁻] ions). The pH scale is 0-14 with 7 being neutral. The acid side is 0-7 and the alkaline side is 7-14. Soil pH is important in the availability of nutrients to the plant. Ideal soil pH for turfgrass is in the range of 5.5 to 6.5 - slightly acid – as this is where most nutrients are readily available.

Wetting agents

When dry weather persists, use wetting agents to hydrate the soil profile sufficiently to aid healthy growth and moisture availability. Wetting agents can maximise an even wetting front throughout the profile. Scotts Hydraflo 2, in granular or liquid form, will do the job perfectly. If you ask a TV-renovator for a wetting agent, he'll hand you his hair gel. Encouraging, growing and protecting turfgrass root systems throughout the year is critical. Waiting until summer to worry about summer decline is too late. Scotts has a wide range of products that can be used in a variety of ways for most renovation and general turf growth and maintenance requirements for professional turf managers.