

## The Paper

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GALESBURG — Winter has seemed longer than ever this year and homeowners across the country are itching to get out of their houses and back to caring for their lawns and landscapes. Mother Nature does a great job when it comes to waking up plants from a long winter's nap and kick starting new growth but sometimes she needs a little help. Fortunately, Spring-Green Lawn Care owner Judy Silberer receives many calls each spring on how to deal with rejuvenating green spaces and jumpstarting new growth after the winter period and has provided answers to some of the most frequently asked questions she has received over the years.

Should I rake my lawn in the spring? A light raking with a leaf rake or flexible tine rake is good for your lawn but not necessary unless your lawn has developed a disease known as snow mold. Snow mold usually develops near melting piles of snow in shady areas and results in unsightly matted, seemingly dead patches on your lawn but can be remedied by a light raking. As for raking the rest of your property, it's a good idea to rake up any leaves that have become entrapped in bushes and shrubs in the landscape beds; the landscape will look better and the new leaves and flowers will be allowed to shine through unobstructed.

When should I fertilize my lawn for the first time? As your lawn is coming out of dormancy, it needs food to grow so I recommend waiting until the ground thaws to fertilize your lawn. Use a product that is higher in nitrogen – the first number on a fertilizer bag – because it is a major nutrient that most plants require in order to maintain good color and growth. Try to fertilize as soon as possible, for waiting until May or June could result in a weak, pale lawn.

What is the best time to apply a crabgrass control? There is an old adage that states that one should apply crabgrass control when the forsythia blooms. Unfortunately, forsythia have been known to bloom as early the first week of March, which is often too early in many climates. A better way to determine when to apply crabgrass control is to watch the soil temperature. The best way to check this is to take a standard meat thermometer and push it one inch deep into a sunny area of the lawn. If the temperatures are nearing the 60 degree mark – the optimum temperature for crabgrass germination – it's time to apply. Also, be sure to water soon after application, as many crabgrass control products require water to evenly distribute the product across the soil surface.