



Compacted soil can threaten lawns, plants and other vegetation.

# Know the signs

## Five ways to tell if your soil might be compacted

Compacted soil can result from any number of activities, including walking on a lawn. When soil on a lawn is compacted, grass roots might not receive the water, oxygen and nutrients they need to grow in strong. The can lead to weak lawns that are vulnerable to various issues. However, homeowners need not avoid their lawns to prevent soil compaction. Rather, learning to recognize signs of soil compaction and paying special attention to heavily trafficked areas of the yard can help homeowners identify the problem early and address it before grass begins to suffer.

Cooperative Extension, which is supported by the United States Department of Agriculture and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, notes that the following are some sign potential indicators of compacted soil.

- **Hard soil:** Soil that is difficult, if not impossible, to penetrate with a shovel is likely compacted. Even healthy soil is sometimes resistant to penetration, but if homeowners put some muscle into their efforts to penetrate the soil and still can't do so, then the soil is compacted.
- **Standing water:** Water standing on top of soil for a long time is doing so because the soil is likely so compacted that the water, which roots need to thrive, cannot get through.
- **Excessive water runoff:** Runoff occurs when watering lawns. But if nearly all of the

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water intended for the lawn and the soil beneath it is seemingly being diverted away from the grass, then that means the water cannot get through to the soil or that so little

is getting through that the lawn's health is in jeopardy.

- **Loss of vegetation or poor plant growth:** Compacted soil prevents water, nutrients and oxygen from

accessing the root zone. As a result, plants, including trees, are vulnerable to disease and even death.

- **Surface crust:** Surface crust, which blocks oxygen and water from penetrating the soil and tends to inflict areas

like footpaths and playgrounds due to heavy foot traffic, contributes to runoff and soil erosion.

Compacted soil is relatively simple to fix. But when untreated, compacted soil can threaten lawns, plants and other vegetation.

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