

Exercise prevention

Problems that can lead to lawn damage

A beautiful lawn is a goal for many homeowners. Some homeowners may find that lovely lawns may last momentarily, only to disappear when damage — be it pest-, weather- or child-related — sets in.

While well-established turf can be resilient, even the most well-maintained lawns can be vulnerable. Preventing lawn damage first involves getting to the root of the problem.

• **Lack of sunlight:** All plants need the proper ratio of sunlight

to grow. Too much sunlight and plant blades can scorch. Too little sunlight and grass may turn brown and die. Although there are shade-tolerant varieties of grass, homeowners also can explore alternative landscapes. Work in a garden bed or create a design that utilizes gravel or mulch. Avoid aggressively pruning back trees to give the lawn more sunlight in that area, as this may just damage the trees.

• **Chemical spills:** Gasoline and fertilizer spills and pesticide applications in high concentrations can cause the lawn to yellow or brown in spots.



Walking on the lawn can cause soil compaction that eventually leads to damage.

Carefully refill lawn gas tanks and fertilizer spreaders on the sidewalk or driveway to avoid overflow onto

the lawn. If spills occur, flood the area promptly with water to dilute.

• **Foot traffic:** Lawns can take a pounding from foot traffic, leading to compaction and spots of dead lawn. Try to redirect the traffic elsewhere to give worn down areas a break. Aeration can relieve soil compaction. If a certain area has become the de facto pathway, install a paver, gravel or concrete walkway in that spot.

• **Debris:** Leaving a tool, kids' toys, piece of wood, or any debris on the lawn can quickly suffocate the grass beneath and cause the lawn to die quickly. Make sure that no items are left on the lawn for

an extended period of time.

• **Mowing patterns:** Running the mower in the same pattern over and over can cause ruts in the grass that lead to damage, so avoid mowing in the same direction on consecutive cuts. Avoid mowing on very hot days or when the lawn is soggy. Both can cause tracks to form in the lawn.

• **Mowers:** Dull lawn mower blades can damage lawns, as can mowing too fast. Grass blades can be torn, snapped and more, resulting in brown spots.

• **Wildlife:** Animals and insects can destroy turf roots. Animals or insects may feed on the grass from underneath its surface, compromising the lawn's ability to procure nutrients and water. Animals like moles or raccoons may feed on grubs in the lawn, and treating for grubs can alleviate torn-up turf.

Lawns can be hearty, but they're also highly susceptible to damage. Even seemingly harmless things can compromise the integrity of a lawn. Understanding the causes of lawn damage can help homeowners protect their lawns.

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Avoid aches and pains when gardening

People who have not spent much time in a garden may not consider this rewarding hobby much of a threat to their health. But as veteran gardeners can attest, gardening can contribute to nagging aches and pains that can force even the most ardent green-thumbers indoors.

There are several ways gardening enthusiasts can prevent the aches and pains that can sometimes pop up after long days in the garden.

• **Use ergonomic gardening tools.** Ergonomic gardening tools are designed to prevent the types of aches, pains and injuries that can cut gardeners' seasons short. Gardening injuries can affect any area of the body, but injuries or aches and pains af-

fecting the back, wrists and hands are among the most common physical problems gardeners endure. Look for ergonomic tools that reduce the strain on these areas of the body. Even arthritis sufferers who love to garden may find that ergonomic tools make it possible for them to spend more time in their gardens.

• **Alternate tasks.** Repetitive-strain injuries can affect gardeners who spend long periods of time performing the same activity in their gardens. By alternating tasks during gardening sessions, gardeners can reduce their risk of suffering repetitive strain injuries. Alternate tasks not just on muscle groups worked, but also level of difficulty.

• **Take frequent breaks.** Frequent breaks can help combat the stiffness and muscle aches that may not appear until gardeners finish their gardening sessions. Breaks help to alleviate muscles or joints that can become overtaxed when gardening for long, uninterrupted periods of time. When leaning down or working on your hands and knees, stand up to take breaks every 20 minutes or the moment aches and pains start.

• **Maintain good posture.** Back injuries have a tendency to linger, which can keep gardeners indoors and out of their gardens. When gardening, maintain good posture to prevent back injuries. Gardening back braces can protect the back by providing support. Tool pouches attached to gardening stools or chairs also can be less taxing on the back than gardening belts tied around the waist.

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