

MowTitans

Knox & Plymouth, Indiana

Fall Lawn Care Checklist

7 Tasks to Prepare Your Lawn for Winter

Autumn is the most important season for your lawn. What you do now — aerating, overseeding, feeding, and cleaning up — determines how thick, green, and weed-free your grass comes back in spring. This checklist walks you through the seven essential tasks, in the right order, with timing specific to the Knox and Plymouth, IN area (Zone 5b/6a).

■ Task 1: Clear the Leaves — Don't Let Them Mat

Timing: Weekly, mid-Oct through early Nov

A thick layer of wet leaves blocks light, traps moisture, and invites snow mold and fungal disease. Rake or blow leaves weekly through October and early November. For large yards, a leaf vacuum or mower with a bagging attachment is faster. Compost the leaves or use them as mulch in garden beds — don't bag them for the landfill.

■ Task 2: Final Mow — Cut Lower, But Don't Scalp

Timing: Late Oct – early Nov (last cut before freeze)

Drop the deck one notch (about 2.5–3 inches) for the last two cuts of the season. Shorter grass reduces matting under snow and discourages voles, but scalping (cutting below 2 inches) stresses the crown and opens the door for winter weeds. Make the final cut after leaf drop slows but before the first hard freeze — usually late October to early November in Starke and Marshall counties.

■ Task 3: Aerate — Relieve Compaction Before Winter

Timing: Mid-Sept through mid-Oct (ideal window)

Core aeration pulls plugs of soil, letting air, water, and nutrients reach the root zone. Fall is the ideal time: the soil is still warm enough for roots to grow into the holes, and weed seeds aren't germinating. Rent a core aerator (not a spike aerator) or hire a local Titan — it takes a couple hours for a typical quarter-acre lot. Leave the plugs on the lawn; they break down in a week or two.

■ Task 4: Overseed — Fill Thin Spots While Soil Is Warm

Timing: Immediately after aerating, by Oct 15

Broadcast a quality tall fescue / Kentucky bluegrass blend right after aerating — the holes give seed-to-soil contact. Use 6–8 lbs per 1,000 sq ft for new lawns, 3–4 lbs for thickening. Keep the surface damp (light watering 2× daily) until germination (10–14 days for fescue, 21+ for bluegrass). In our area, the overseeding window closes around October 15 — after that, soil temps drop too low for reliable germination.

■ **Task 5: Fertilize — The Most Important Feeding of the Year**

Timing: Late Oct – early Nov (after final mow)

Apply a slow-release, high-nitrogen winterizer fertilizer (look for 20-0-10 or similar, with 50%+ slow-release N). This feeding builds carbohydrate reserves in the roots, not top growth — the grass stores energy for a fast green-up in March. One application, right after the final mow, is enough. Sweep any granules off driveways and sidewalks so they don't wash into storm drains.

■ **Task 6: Treat Broadleaf Weeds — Last Chance Before Dormancy**

Timing: Mid-Sept through mid-Oct (before freeze)

Dandelions, clover, plantain, and creeping charlie are actively moving energy to their roots in fall — spot-spray with a selective broadleaf herbicide (2,4-D + dicamba + MCPP) and the chemical rides down to the root for a cleaner kill than spring apps. Skip this if you overseeded (wait until new grass has been mowed 3×). Target individual weeds; don't broadcast unless the lawn is mostly weeds.

■ **Task 7: Winterize Equipment & Irrigation — Protect Your Investment**

Timing: Before first hard freeze (early–mid Nov)

Drain and blow out sprinkler lines — frozen pipes crack and cost hundreds to repair in spring. Run the mower dry or add fuel stabilizer, change the oil, sharpen the blade, and clean the deck. Disconnect and store hoses. A little time now saves a headache (and money) when the first 70-degree day hits next April.

Pro Tip from Local Titans

If you only do **three** things, make them: **1) Clear the leaves, 2) Aerate + overseed (together), 3) Winterizer fertilizer.** Those three give you 80% of the benefit. Short on time? Post the job on Mow Titans and a local Titan handles it — before/after photos included, and you approve before anyone gets paid.

Need a hand? Post your yard job at mowtitans.com

A local Titan mows it. You get your Saturday back.

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