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## *Gardening by the Moon*

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### *Obnoxious Aster Weeds in your Lawn*

By Dr. Moon

Fall is when those wiry, irksome little weeds with daisy-like flowers appear in your lawns. Don't let those little flowers fool you; Aster weeds are unsightly and indicate poor soil quality. The good news is that these weeds are preventable in the future, and you can still get rid of them from your yard now.

The fact is, Aster weeds prefer poor soils low in fertility; this is why you often see them in open fields. Aster will not grow in lawns fertilized three times yearly with a complete fertilizer in March, June, and September, and in addition to fertilizer, you should also apply pre-emergent weed control, like Scotts Halts or Preen, three times a year in February, May, and September.

If you currently have Aster in your yard, you can hand-pull them. Pulling Aster is easiest when the soil is moist, and using a screwdriver by pushing it down by the root will make it easier to remove the whole plant.

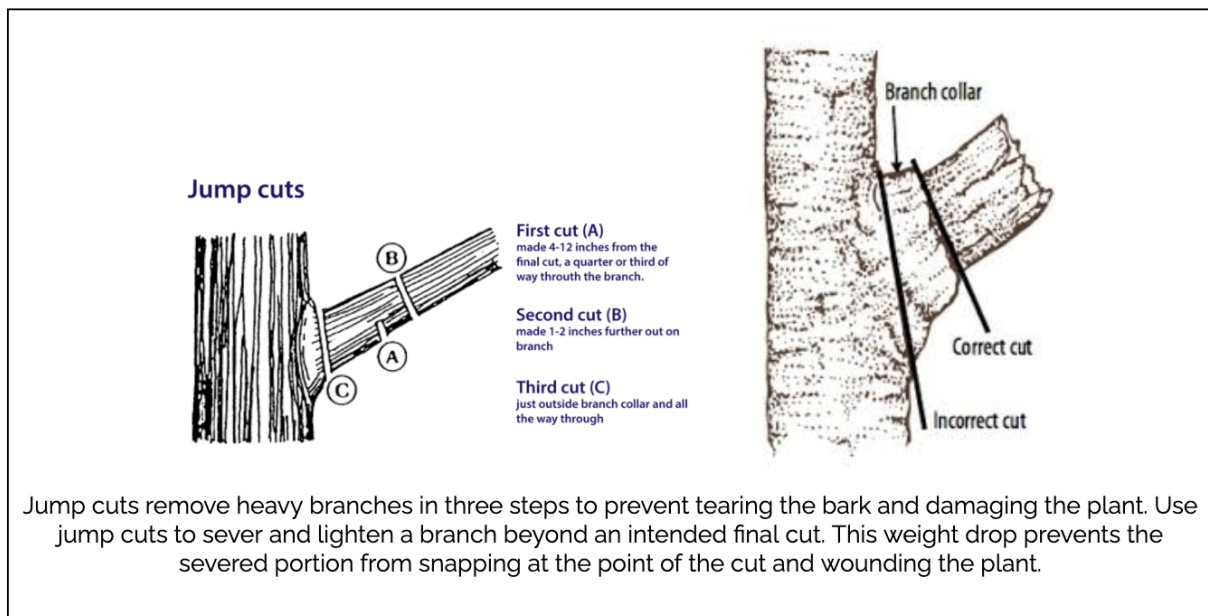
By fertilizing and applying a pre-emergent to your yard thrice yearly, you will avoid Aster from popping up, plus have an overall healthier and weed-free lawn.



# Cooler temperatures have arrived!

It is time to ensure your outside areas are ready for winter before the cold temperatures settle in. Let's review the final checklist to make your yard work in the spring more manageable.

- Clean up all plant debris, such as leaves, and remove dead plants. Plant debris is an excellent hiding place for rodents, roaches, insects, and other vermin. Also, removing plant debris rids your yard of potential diseases that can infect your plants next year.
- Prune your trees for shape and lift canopies on trees next to the street and in your yard. Low-hanging tree branches in your yard can shade your turf, and vehicles can hit and damage low-hanging branches on street trees. When removing branches, make a **jump cut** before making the final cut at the **branch collar**.



- Cut back perennials that have started to decline and remove spent flowers.
- Fertilize your beds if you still need to do so this fall.

- Replenish mulch in beds to add an extra layer of protection for your plants from the cold weather. Mulch holds valuable moisture to reduce winter watering and helps prevent unwanted winter weeds.
- If you have not done so this fall, add a pre-emergent over the mulch, such as Halts or Preen, for another layer of weed protection to prevent weeds.
- Protect your valuable clay or ceramic containers from freeze damage. Empty containers and store them in the garage. If that is impossible, turn them upside down in a protected area.
- Clean all your gardening tools.
- Put away all gardening equipment and water hoses.
- Protect outdoor faucets from freezing.
- If you did not apply a fall pre-emergent to your turf, do so now to prevent weeds from germinating. Apply Halts or Preen at label rates.
- Control any active weeds in your turf with post-emergent weed control for Southern Grasses. Again, follow all label instructions when applying.
- Fertilize your turf if you have not done so in the last 12 weeks. Fertilizing feeds turf roots during the winter.
- Start lowering your mowing height on turf. During the winter, thick turf packs down and becomes more susceptible to diseases that will overwinter and attack new growth in the spring. Drop mowing height by one setting every month until March. And yes, if you do this, you will have only some of that debris to remove in the spring.
- Plant winter color such as pansies, violas, dianthus, snapdragons, kale, ornamental cabbage, or one of the vast varieties of Dusty Miller (photos in list order).



- ❑ Set the irrigation controller to run one time every two weeks. Turn your controller off if you have received rain during those two weeks.
- ❑ **BE ALERT FOR EXTREME COLD WEATHER!!**  
Drought-stressed plants are more susceptible to cold damage, so watering plants a few days before a cold snap is good practice. Watering just before a freeze helps by creating warmth— the wet ground remains warmer than the dry ground, which insulates the root structure of the grass and plants, decreasing the risk of freeze damage. Make sure to turn your irrigation to the off position after watering.

*Once you complete these tasks, you can rest for a few months and enjoy the upcoming holiday season with your family and friends!*

