

Q: What time of the year is best for aerating my lawn?

A: The soil under our lawns often gets heavily compacted with foot and equipment traffic, and aerating, or removing small plugs is a very necessary part of good lawn maintenance. Removing the plugs allows air and water to penetrate the soil, and allows for greater uptake of nutrients. If you have heavy soils and heavy foot traffic, you will need to aerate several times a year, once in the spring and again in the fall. If your lawn receives little traffic, once a year in the spring when the grass is actively growing should be adequate. It is not a good idea to aerate if your lawn is saturated as the equipment will compact the soil, rather defeating the purpose of aerating in the first place. If you have thick thatch layer, you should remove that prior to aerating. De-thatching mowers can be rented, or for a small lawn, use a thatching rake. Complete lawn care information is available on the UC IPM website, <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/TOOLS/TURF/>

Q: My garden has been invaded by a plant that looks like carrot, but it makes little brown seeds that spread all over the place.

A: The sample you brought into the office is *Torilis arvensis*, a member of the APIACEAE or Carrot family that has become a tenacious weed in many areas. The annual plant has deceptively ferny, delicate foliage, and a long tap root. Small, white flowers will appear later this spring, held in clusters above the foliage. Brown, bur-like seed heads will follow. It is known as Hedge parsley, and has some history as an edible plant. Deer will eat it in Britain, but do not seem to have discovered a liking for it here. This European native has become a pest, and as you have found, once it has seeded, it germinates prolifically. This is the best time of the year to weed this plant out. Hand pulling is most successful. With the reserves found in the long tap-root, hoeing off the top will not kill the plant. The young plants can be composted. A good picture of the plant can be seen at [http://www.coestatepark.com/torilis\\_arvensis.htm](http://www.coestatepark.com/torilis_arvensis.htm).