

give it a GO



Scarifying work

Consumer editor **Julia Heaton** tries out a wheeled lawn scarifier to see if it's the ideal match for clearing thatch

I GUESS THAT scarifying is one of those jobs that's all too easy to put on hold until the build-up of thatch in a lawn starts to take its toll. By thatch I mean all that dead material like moss, grass clippings and dead leaves that stop grass from rooting into the soil, robbing it of nutrients, air and the like.

Having made the mistake of being too heavy-handed with scarifying in the past, I was hoping the Darlac wheeled version would help me go lightly yet still get the job done. It's a

"I could get the angle of attack just right"

simple enough design incorporating 11 galvanised steel tines which are replaceable (for around 50p each). These give a working width of 16in. (41cm) – just right for me.

Extendable handle

The handle extends so it has a reach ranging from 38in. (97cm) – 59in. (1.5m), great for any height of user. And it was easy to adjust, involving a simple twist and lock movement, similar to that used on extendable loppers. There was a definite 'click' into locking position too, which is always a good sign, proof of the pudding being that the lock didn't work itself free during prolonged use.

The 5in. (12cm) diameter wheels were the icing on the cake for me



The wheels glided easily across the lawn and bore the working weight well

because they bore the weight, so I could get the angle of attack just right. Here again the fact that the handle extended helped enormously. So the lower I held the handle to the lawn the deeper it penetrated.

Lifting tines

It only took a couple of a minutes to get a technique going. This involved lowering the handle as I pulled towards me then raising it to lift the tines up above the grass as I guided the wheels back to start position. At the same time any thatch I collected fell away ready to

be collected up. Of course, this can be a tiring job but, as manual scarifying goes, I reckon wheels are definitely the way forward (pardon the pun!). I was pleasantly surprised by the 6½in. (16cm) red plastic grip too. It was nicely contoured so sat easily in my palm and a ribbed effect made it that bit more non-slip.

Although the lawn I took on when moving house probably needs returfing, I was really pleased with the thatch I collected from it and a friend's front lawn. And stowing the tool away afterwards wasn't a problem either because I was able to retract the handle right down and use the hanging hook provided, ready for next spring.

this week...

Lawn scarifier

5 STAR SCORE



SUPPLIER: Darlac at garden centres. For details see darmac.com or call 01753 547790

PRICE: £30

PROS: Extendable, handle/ replaceable blades/ wheels/ soft grip/ hanging loop

CONS: None apparent

TOP MARKS



(above) Removing thatch like this was quick and easy. (left) The working width was just right for me.