UPCOMING EVENTS

2010 Grounds Maintenance Workshops

The Spring 2010 Grounds Maintenance Workshops are a great way to catch up on the latest turf and landscape research. This spring there will be 3 workshops.

    February 24 - Manhattan
    February 25 - Newton
    March 3 - Lawrence

Attendees can receive 2 credit hours in 3A and 2 credit hours in 3B towards their Kansas Commercial Pesticide Applicators recertification.

You can register online by going to our KSUTurf-Cashnet site. You can get more info and print and mail a registration form from http://www.ksuturf.com/GroundsWorkshop.html

Hope to see you there!

TURFGRASS

Lawn Calendar for Cool-Season Grasses

The following suggestions are for cool-season grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue. Zoysiagrass, bermudagrass and buffalograss are warm-season grasses and require a different maintenance regime. A warm-season grass calendar will be covered in a later newsletter.
March
Spot treat broadleaf weeds if necessary. Treat on a day that is 50 degrees or warmer. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours of application will reduce effectiveness.

April
Apply crabgrass preventer when redbud trees are in full bloom (usually in April). Preventer needs to be watered in before it will start to work. Remember that a good, thick lawn is the best weed prevention and may be all that is needed.

May
Fertilize with a slow-release fertilizer if you water your lawn or if you receive enough rainfall that your turf normally doesn’t go drought-dormant during the summer. If there are broadleaf weeds, spot treat with a spray or use a fertilizer that includes a weed killer. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours of application will reduce effectiveness of the weed killer, but the fertilizer needs to be watered in. If you are using a product that has both fertilizer and weed killer, wait 24 hours after application before watering it in.

June through Mid-July
Apply second round of crabgrass preventer by June 15 – unless you have used Dimension (dithiopyr) or Barricade (prodiamine) for the April application. These two products normally provide season-long control with a single application. Remember to water it in. If grubs have been a problem in the past, apply a product containing "Merit" or "Mach 2" during the first half of July. This works to prevent grub damage. It must be watered in before it becomes active.

Late-July through August
If you see grub damage, apply a grub killer that contains Dylox. Merit and Mach 2 are effective against young grubs and may not be effective on late instar grubs. The grub killer containing Dylox must be watered in within 24 hours or effectiveness drops.

September
Fertilize around Labor Day. This is the most important fertilization of the year. Water in fertilizer.

November
Fertilize. This fertilizer is taken up by the roots but is not used until the following spring. Water in fertilizer. Spray for broadleaf weeds even if they are small. Broadleaf weeds are much easier to control in the fall than in the spring. Spray on a day that is at least 50 degrees. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours reduces effectiveness. Use label rates for all products! (WU)
FRUIT

Pruning Overgrown Apple Trees

Apple trees that are not pruned for several years will often produce so many branches that little energy is left for fruit production. Overgrown apple trees are also difficult to harvest and spray. Gardeners who have such a tree are often at a loss as to how to get it back in shape.

Often the best recommendation for such a tree is to make one pruning cut at ground level and start over with a new tree. However, trees may have sentimental value that will make revitalization worth the time and effort. Realize that this will be a multi-year process because no more than 30 percent of the tree should be removed in one year. Here are some steps to follow:

1. Remove all dead wood. This does not count toward the 30 percent.

2. Remove suckers from the base of the tree.

3. Choose approximately six of the best branches to keep as scaffold branches. Remove all others. Branches should be cut flush to the branch collar. The collar is the natural swelling that occurs where a branch connects to the trunk or to a larger branch. Removing the collar would leave a larger wound that would take additional time to heal. Do not paint wounds. Wounds heal more quickly if left open.

Candidates for removal include branches with narrow crotch angles, which are more likely to break in wind and ice storms, and those that cross branches you will save. This may be all that is possible the first year if the 30 percent threshold has been reached.

4. Thin the branches on each scaffold branch. Remove crowded branches to open up the tree to light and allow humidity to escape. Shorten each scaffold branch by cutting back to a side branch. When you are through, the tree should have enough wood removed so that a softball can be thrown through the tree.

Severe pruning often will cause an apple to tree to produce vigorous side shoots from the trunk called water sprouts. These should be removed throughout the growing season so the center of the tree stays open. (WU)
Brrrrr. It has been cold this winter. I was talking with Bob Bauernfeind recently. He has been getting some of the same questions people have been asking me…”Will the really cold temps this winter, reduce bug populations next spring and summer?”

Bob put it this way. “If one exposed grubs directly to the cold air, you would freeze/kill them. But they are in the soil! And being buried in the soil protects them all winter long.


Note the two coldest days in December and January:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Min Air Temp</th>
<th>Avg. Soil Temp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scandia</td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td>-16.3</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>12/10</td>
<td>-11.7</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandia</td>
<td>1/9</td>
<td>-14.7</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>-10.7</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So you can see by hiding in the soil, grubs can stay safe and protected. And if there is a layer of snow on top of the soil, the soil will be even more insulated. Bob did a little test in his backyard and buried a thermometer under the snow but on top of the grass. Then he placed a thermometer on a stake just above the snow surface. He measured 29 degrees under the snow and -4 degrees in the air. That is a 34-degree difference between the two thermometers separated only by a foot of snow.

Stay warm. Spring is just around the corner. (RS)
FLOWERS

Fertilizing Spring-Flowering Bulbs

The best time to fertilize spring-flowering bulbs is when foliage emerges in the spring rather than at flowering. Traditionally, gardeners have applied fertilizer during bloom or a bit after, but because bulb roots start to die at flowering, fertilizer applied at bloom is wasted. Roots are active when the foliage first pokes through the ground. Nutrients applied then help the plant produce flowers the following year. If bulbs have been fertilized in the past, there is often plenty of phosphorus and potassium in the soil. It is best to use a soil test to be certain. If the soil needs phosphorus and potassium, use a complete fertilizer (such as 10-10-10, 9-9-6, etc.) at the rate of 2.5 lbs. per 100 square feet. This would equal 1 rounded teaspoon per square foot. If phosphorus and potassium are not needed, blood meal makes an excellent fertilizer. It should be applied at the rate of 2 lbs. per 100 square feet or 1 teaspoon per square foot. Turf fertilizers such as a 27-3-3 or 30-3-3 can be used, but cut the rate by a third. Remember to leave the foliage until it dies naturally. The energy in the foliage is transferred to the bulb as the foliage dies and will help bloom next year. (WU)

MISCELLANEOUS

Don’t Work Soil Too Wet

This has been a very wet winter for most parts of the state. Resist the temptation to work any soil if it is wet. Doing so destroys the structure of the soil resulting in clods that may not break down all summer. To determine if a soil is too wet to work, grab a handful and squeeze. If water comes out, it is much too wet. Even if no water drips out, it still may not be dry enough to work. Push a finger into the soil you squeezed. If it crumbles, it is dry enough, but if your finger just leaves an indentation, more time is needed. Be sure to take your handfuls of soil from the depth you plan to work the soil because deeper soils may contain more moisture than the surface.

If tree planting is in your future, you may want to work the soil as soon as it is dry enough to work. You may then protect that area from becoming too wet by covering with a tarp if rain is forecast near the planting date. (WU)
Uses of Coldframes
These mini-greenhouses can be useful for serious gardeners. Though often used for hardening off seedlings, they can also be helpful in extending the growing season in the fall for cool-season vegetables such as lettuce, kale, green onions, and radishes. You may also want to start pansies in the fall, overwinter them in the cold frame, and set out large plants that give immediate color in the spring. Cold frames also can be used to overwinter nursery plants or give the cold treatment needed to force bulbs. In these last two cases, the cold frame is covered with a tarp or something similar late in the fall just before the ground freezes so that the temperature hovers just above freezing. During the summer, you can remove the top and use the structure as a nursery.

Basic Design of Cold frames and Hotbeds
The structure of both cold frames and hotbeds is the same. Basically it's a box covered with glass, plastic or clear fiberglass. The box size varies but is often 5 to 6 feet deep and 6 to 12 feet wide. Height also varies but is often about 18 inches in the back and 12 inches in the front. The slope should face south so that rays from the winter sun can be captured more easily.

The only difference between a cold frame and a hotbed is that hotbeds contain a heat source. In the early part of last century, that heat source was often 12 to 24 inches of fresh, straw-laced horse manure placed in a pit under the structure. Today, electric heating cables are often used. Hotbeds are more versatile than cold frames and allow young, tender plants to be started earlier in the year.

Cold frames and hotbeds used to require almost constant attention. Venting is absolutely necessary on bright, sunshiny days, even if the outside temperature is relatively cool. If the frames are not vented in a timely manner, the plants can easily overheat. Venting in normally done by having the clear covering (glass, fiberglass, or plastic) fastened to a frame that is attached to the box portion of the structure with hinges. This sash is propped open to let excess heat escape whenever temperatures demand. Though sashes can be propped open by hand, today we have automatic ventilators that use a temperature-sensitive compressed gas to open sashes. These do not require an external power source and can be set to open at different temperatures.

Cold frames and hotbeds can be purchased, or you may want to build your own. Plans for constructing either structure can be found at:

http://extension.missouri.edu/explorepdf/agguides/hort/g06965.pdf (WU)

 Contributors:
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To view Upcoming Events: http://tinyurl.com/fswqe
Horticulture 2010 E-mail Subscription

For questions or further information contact: Hort WebMeister.

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