Video of the Week:  Saving Flower Seeds

TURFGRASS

Control Broadleaf Weeds in Lawns in Late October - Early November

Late October to early November is the most effective time to control broadleaf weeds in lawns. Dandelions usually produce a flush of new plants in late September, and the winter annual weeds henbit and chickweed should have germinated in October. These young plants are small and easily controlled with herbicides such as 2,4-D or combination products (Trimec, Weed-B-Gon, Weed-Out) that contain 2,4-D, MCPP and Dicamba. Even established dandelions are more easily controlled now than in the spring because they are actively moving materials from the top portion of the plant to the roots. Herbicides will translocate to the roots as well and will kill the plant from the roots up. Choose a day that is 50 degrees or higher. The better the weed is growing, the more weed killer will be moved from the leaves to the roots. Cold temperatures will slow or stop this process.

Weed Free Zone (also sold under the name of Speed Zone) contains the three active ingredients mentioned above, plus carfentrazone. It will give a quicker response than the other products mentioned especially as temperatures approach 50 degrees. (WU)

Tucking Your Lawnmower in for the Winter

If you are done mowing for the year, be sure to service your mower before putting it away. Make sure you drain the gas tank of gasoline-powered engines or use a gasoline stabilizer. Untreated gasoline can become thick and gummy. A few drops of oil squirted inside the spark plug hole (after you remove the spark plug) will help lubricate the cylinder. While you have
the spark plug removed, replace it with a new one.

If your equipment has a battery, clean the battery terminals, which usually corrode during the season. A wire-bristle brush is a good tool for doing this. The battery can then be removed or connected to a battery monitor that will keep it charged over winter. If you remove the battery, be sure to store it in a protected location for the winter (a cool basement works best).

Now is also an excellent time to sharpen mower blades so they'll be ready next spring. Sharpening rotary mower blades is fairly straightforward. The following steps will guide you through this process:
* Check the blade for major damage. If you can't fix it, it likely will need to be replaced.
* Remove grass and debris from the blade with a moist cloth. Dry before beginning to sharpen the cutting edge.
* Remove nicks from the cutting edge, using a grinding wheel or hand-file.
* If using a grinding wheel, match the existing edge angle to the wheel. If hand-filing, file at the same angle as the existing edge.
* Grind or file until the edge is 1/32 inch, about the size of a period.
* Particularly with a grinding wheel, avoid overheating the blade as this may warp it.
* Clean the blade with solvent or oil, much like if you were cleaning a gun, for optimum winter storage. Avoid using water because it will promote rust.

Following these tips can help you better prepare your mower for winter storage and also save you some steps this coming spring. (WU)

**Tree Leaves and Turf**

It's that time of year again. Leaves are rapidly falling from deciduous trees so it's a good time to stop and think about options for handling the litter. Although a scattering of leaves won’t harm the lawn, excessive cover prevents sunlight from reaching turfgrass plants. Turf left in this state for an extended period will be unable to make the carbohydrates needed to carry it through the winter.

There are options for dealing with the fallen leaves other than bagging them up and putting them out for the trash collector. Composting is a great way to handle the refuse. Compost can then be used in the vegetable garden and flowerbeds. If you do not compost, you can mow leaves with a mulching mower and let shredded leaves filter into the turf canopy. (A side-discharge mower also will work, but it won't shred the leaves as thoroughly.) This method will be most effective if you do it often enough that leaf litter doesn’t become too thick. Mow while you can still see grass peeking through the leaves.

You may wonder whether this practice will be detrimental to the lawn in the long run. Research at
Michigan State University in which they used a mulching mower to shred up to about one pound of leaves per square yard of lawn (one pound is equal to approximately 6 inches of leaves piled on the grass) for five consecutive years, found no long-term effects of the shredded leaves on turf quality, thatch thickness, organic content of the thatch, or soil test results (pH, nutrients, etc.). If you mow leaves and have a cool-season lawn, it makes sense to be on a fall nitrogen fertilization program and core-aerate in the fall (things you should be doing anyway). If you have a warm-season lawn, you can still use this technique but wait to fertilize and core-aerate until next late May or early June. (WU)

**PESTS**

**Hackberry Psyllids Invading Homes**

These small dark-colored insects are sometimes called jumping plant lice. The adults resemble cicadas in miniature form. They are about 1/8- to 1/5-inch long and small enough to enter homes through ordinary screens. These insects overwinter in buildings or in bark crevices on trees.

After mating in the spring, the females deposit eggs on newly emerging hackberry leaves. Nymphs hatch from the eggs and start feeding on the underside of the leaves. Galls form over the nymph and provide a protective covering. If you have ever seen the bumps on the underside of hackberry leaves, you know what these galls look like. Though these galls are unsightly, the health of the tree is apparently unaffected. Spraying the trees with an insecticide when the leaves are unfurling in the spring will eliminate some of the adults and nymphs before the galls have formed. However, good control is difficult to achieve. Once the nymphs are protected by the galls, chemical controls are ineffective.

Since these insects are specific to hackberry trees, only homes near a hackberry tree are affected. Several steps can be taken during the fall just before frost to reduce entry. Turning off outdoor night-lights and reducing the amount of light shining through night windows helps.

Consider using fine mesh (18) screens on windows that are kept open. Ordinary screens are 12 mesh to the inch. Caulk or plug up cracks and crevices. Keep windows and doors closed when psyllids are active. For temporary reduction, spray exterior surfaces such as window screens, shutters and sides of buildings where psyllids are resting. Look for residual insect sprays labeled to use on outdoor surfaces. Examples of ingredients with residual action include cyfluthrin, bifenthrin, permethrin, Baygon and tralomethrin.

If hackberry psyllids become a nuisance inside, use a vacuum cleaner to suck them up. Be sure to discard the bag immediately after vacuuming so they don't escape and re-infest the home. (WU)
Harvesting and Curing Black Walnut

Black walnuts are ready to be harvested when the hull can be dented with your thumb. You can also wait until the nuts start falling from the tree. Either way it is important to hull walnuts soon after harvest. If not removed, the hull will leach a stain through the nut and into the meat. The stain will not only discolor the meats but also give them an off flavor.

There are several ways to hull walnuts including running them through a corn sheller or pounding each nut through a hole in a board. The hole must be big enough for the nut but smaller than the hull. An easier way is to run over the nuts with a lawn tractor. This will break the hull but not crack the nut. Note that walnut hulls contain a dye that will stain concrete, your hands or about anything else it touches. Wear gloves as the stain is almost impossible to remove.

Wash hulled nuts by spreading them out on the lawn or on a wire mesh and spraying them with water or placing them in a tub of water. If you place them in a tub, the good nuts should sink. Those that float are probably not well-filled with kernels. Next, dry the nuts by spreading them in layers no more than three deep in a cool, shady and dry place such as a garage or tool shed. Drying normally takes two weeks. (WU)

Preserving Garden Tools

Hoes, shovels and other common garden tools often have wooden handles that can deteriorate over time. Storing tools in a protected location can slow that process, but normal use will still expose the tools to the elements. The end of the season is a good time to clean up and protect the handles so they will last for many years. Weathering can raise the grain of wood, resulting in splinters. A light sanding can smooth the handle. Follow that with a light application of wood preservative, linseed oil or polyurethane to protect the wood. Wipe off any excess after a few minutes as oil-based products can attract dirt.

Cleaning any dirt off metal parts and coating with a light application of oil can prevent rust. Good tools are expensive. A few minutes of care after the season is over can help preserve them for many years to come. (WU)

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