Video of the Week:  Low Tunnels Extend the Growing Season

UPCOMING EVENTS

Kansas Turfgrass Conference

The 63rd Annual Kansas Turfgrass Conference will be held December 3, 4 & 5 at the Kansas Expocentre in Topeka. The conference is an excellent way to learn about turf and landscape management, visit with old friends, network with new ones, and see all the latest and greatest equipment and supplies from local and national vendors.

The conference has been approved for Commercial pesticide recertification hours:

1 Core hour
3A - 7 hours
3B - 8 hours

International Society of Arboriculture CEUS and GCSAA education points will also be available by attending the conference.

To register online, go to www.kansasturfconference.eventbrite.com

TURFGRASS

Why Late Lawn Seedings Often Fail

We normally recommend that Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue be seeded in September but no later than October 15. Though plantings later than October 15 can be successful, the odds of success diminish as time passes.

The problem with late plantings is not that the seed will not come up or that young grass plants are sensitive to cold. Most often, the problem is with rooting. Unless the young grass plants have a fairly extensive root system, the freezing and thawing
that takes place during winter heaves plants out of the ground, and they dry out and die. Regardless of when planted, be sure the new lawn is kept watered through the fall. More mature lawns will need less frequent watering but all should go into the winter with moist soil. (Ward Upham)

**Should You Let Turf Grow Tall in the Fall?**

Sometimes you will hear people say to let the grass grow tall right before winter sets in. Their reasoning is that the extra foliage will insulate the crown of the plant from the extreme cold of winter. Although this may sound reasonable, in practice it probably does little, if anything, to increase winter hardiness. On the contrary, a canopy that is too high during the winter may lay over and become matted down, leading to an increased incidence of winter diseases such as snow mold.

Turfgrass species vary genetically in their cold tolerance, with warm-season grasses being less cold tolerant than the cool-season types. Given these differences, cold tolerance is improved by increasing the health of the plants going into the winter, and healthy plants are a result of a sound management program (fertilizing, watering and mowing) during the spring, summer and fall. The lawn will benefit more from continuing to mow at the recommended height than from trying to gain some insulation against winter cold by allowing it to grow tall.

Here is a list of the recommended mowing height ranges (in inches) for home lawns in Kansas:

- Tall fescue  2.5 -3.5
- Kentucky bluegrass  2-3
- Perennial ryegrass  2-3
- Buffalograss 2-3
- Bermudagrass  1-2
- Zoysiagrass  1-2

(Note: Mowing at heights below 1.5 inches requires a reel mower). There may be some benefits gained by adjusting mowing heights WITHIN the recommended range at times. For example, it is a good practice to mow warm-season grasses at the higher end of recommended heights during late summer and early fall because this practice should help them store more carbohydrate reserves for the winter, and it may reduce the incidence of certain cool-weather diseases. But the rule to remember is to stay within the recommended height range for your species. (Ward Upham)
ORNAMENTALS

Why Isn't My Red Maple Red?

Why do some red maple trees have yellow fall foliage instead of brilliant red? Although fall color will vary with different environmental conditions, in many cases the yellow foliage of these red maples has to do with the genetics of the individual tree. Unnamed red maple trees grown from seed are not always brilliant red. They have highly variable fall color. If you want a red maple with red foliage in the fall, choose named, vegetatively propagated red maple cultivars such as Red Sunset, Burgundy Belle or Autumn Flame. October Glory has outstanding foliage color but is late in acclimating for winter and can be damaged by early cold snaps. However, even these "good" cultivars will vary in the level of "redness" from year to year. A number of things can reduce the intensity of color, including extreme heat or drought during the summer and cloudy days and warm nights in the fall. (Ward Upham)

FLOWERS

Garden Mums

As soon as garden chrysanthemums are done flowering, you may cut the plants back to 2 to 3 inches high. Some gardeners prefer to leave the top growth so that it provides some protection from fluctuating soil temperatures. If you choose to cut the tops off, apply a layer of mulch over the top of your mums after the ground has frozen. Mums should not completely dry out during the winter. It may be necessary to water occasionally if sufficient rain or snow has not fallen. (Ward Upham)

Winter Storage of Summer Bulbs

As winter approaches, we need to start thinking about storage of the bulbs that will not survive Kansas winters. The bulbs of gladiolus, caladium, dahlia, tuberous begonia, calla lily, and canna lily need to be dug and stored so they can be planted next year. Actually, the storage organ of the above plants is not a true bulb. Canna and calla lilies are rhizomes, caladium, and tuberous begonias are tubers, gladiolus is a corm, and dahlia is a tuberous rooted plant. All of these plants should be dug after frost has browned the foliage. Then, allow them to dry for about a week in a shady, well-ventilated site.
such as a garage or tool shed. Remove any excess soil and pack them in peat moss, vermiculite, or perlite. Make sure the bulbs don’t touch so that if one decays, the rot doesn’t spread. Dusting them with fungicide before storage will help prevent them from rotting.

Caladium should be stored between 50 and 60 degrees F. The other bulbs mentioned should be stored near 40 degrees F. Finding a good spot to store the bulbs may be difficult. Some people place them against a basement wall farthest from the furnace and insulate them so the wall keeps them cool. (Ward Upham)

Contributors: Ward Upham, Extension Associate

To view Upcoming Events: http://tinyurl.com/fswqe

The web version includes color images that illustrate subjects discussed. To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, send an e-mail message to cdipman@ksu.edu or wupham@ksu.edu listing your e-mail address in the message.

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