Video of the Week: When to Fertilize Your Lawn

TURFGRASS

Little Barley in Lawns

Many people mistake little barley (*Hordeum pusillum*) for a little foxtail because the foxtail and little barley seedheads are similar. However, little barley is a winter annual that comes up in late September - October and spends the winter as a small plant. It thrives in the cooler spring temperatures, forms seed heads and dies out usually by July. Foxtail, on the other hand, is a summer annual that does well in hot weather. Also, foxtail will not produce seedheads until mid- to late-summer.

So, why are we talking about little barley now? Because now is NOT the time to control it unless it is in an area where a non-selective herbicide that kills everything such as glyphosate (Roundup) can be used. The best control for little barley in turf is a thick lawn that is mowed high enough that sunlight does not hit the soil. Little barley seed will not germinate in such conditions.

Overseeding in early September can thicken up a tall fescue lawn and prevent a little barley infestation. However, if you do not plan to overseed even though the lawn is a bit thin, preemergence herbicides can be used to provide at least partial control of this weed. The only preemergence herbicide that I know is labeled specifically for little barley is Surflan. It is also sold under the name of Weed Impede by Monterey Lawn and Garden.

Surflan can only be used on warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, buffalograss, zoysiagrass) and tall fescue grown in warm-season areas such as Kansas. However, Dimension (dithiopyr), is labeled for barley (*Herodium spp.*) which would include little barley and therefore can be used to keep this weed under control. Because little barley is a winter annual, apply the preemergence herbicide about mid-September and water in to activate. If overseeding, do not apply any preemergence herbicide as it will interfere with the germination of tall fescue. (Ward Upham)

VEGETABLES
**Mulching Tomatoes**

Soils are warm enough now that tomatoes can benefit from mulching as long as the soils are not saturated with water. Tomatoes prefer even levels of soil moisture and mulches provide such by preventing excessive evaporation. Other benefits of mulching include weed suppression, moderating soil temperatures and preventing the formation of a hard crust on the soil. Crusted soils restrict air movement into and out of the soil and slow the water infiltration rate.

Hay and straw mulches are very popular for tomatoes but may contain weed or volunteer grain seeds. Grass clippings can also be used but should be applied as a relatively thin layer – only 2 to 3 inches thick. Clippings should also be dry as wet clipping can mold and become so hard that water can’t pass through. Also, do not use clippings from lawns that have been treated with a weed killer until some time has passed. With most types of weed killers, clippings from the fourth mowing after treatment may be used. If the lawn was treated with a product containing quinclorac (Drive), the clippings should not be used as mulch. If the weed killer used has a crabgrass killer, it likely contains quinclorac. (Ward Upham)

**Onions Developing**

This is the time of year that onions grow and develop rapidly. Regular watering (if the soil ever dries out) and a light fertilization are helpful to maximize growth. If your soil tends to be alkaline, use ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) at the rate of ½ cup per 10 feet of row. Or you can use a lawn fertilizer such as a 29-5-5, 27-3-3 or anything similar but only use 1/3 cup per 10 feet of row. Make sure the lawn fertilizer does not have a weed preventer or weed killer included. Sprinkle the fertilizer 2 to 3 inches alongside the row and water in. Do not fertilize after the onions start to bulb.

Onions develop so that as much as 2/3 of the bulb remains out of the soil. There is normal and there is no need to cover the bulb with soil. (Ward Upham)

**FRUIT**

‘Tip' Blackberries, Black Raspberries and Purple Raspberries

The growth and fruiting habits of blackberries and raspberries are the same. The root system is perennial, surviving many years, but canes are biennial and only live two years.

First-year canes are called primocanes. They emerge from the soil and grow but with most varieties, the primocanes do not fruit. Primocanes become floricanes the second year. Floricanes fruit and then die. Each cane lives only two years.
Pinching (tipping) the top 2 to 3 inches of the primocanes increases branching and fruiting. Tipping can improve yield by 3 to 5 times and is vital if you wish to have good yields.

The height and frequency of tipping varies with species and whether the variety fruits on primocanes or not. Those that do fruit on primocanes are often referred to as “everbearing.” Those that only produce fruit the second year, we will call “traditional.” Below is a listing of the different methods used.

- **Blackberries: Traditional** - Tip at 4 feet
- **Blackberries: Everbearing** - Tip at 25 to 30 inches high. Laterals are also tipped when they reach 25 to 30 inches.
- **Black Raspberries** - Tip at 3 feet
- **Purple Raspberries** - Tip at 36 to 40 inches
- **Red Raspberries** - Do not tip. (Ward Upham)

**FLOWERS**

**Spring-Flowering Bulb Foliage can be Removed**

It is important to leave spring-flowering bulb foliage in place until it “ripens” or becomes brown. The energy produced by the leaves after flowering is transferred to the bulb so that it can flower the following year. The ripening process should be near completion now for tulips, daffodils and various other spring-flowering bulbs. Use clippers, scissors or even a mower to remove dead foliage. Also, try to map out where the bulbs are planted as there will be no foliage to make the location next fall when it is time to fertilize. (Ward Upham)

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**Watering Houseplants While on Vacation**

We are approaching the time of year when many people take vacation. In the rush to get everything done before leaving, don’t forget your houseplants will probably need watering while you are gone. The best alternative is to have someone water them for you. However, if this is not possible, there are alternatives.

1. Well-watered plants can be placed inside a plastic bag. Prop up the bag by using wooden dowels or something similar to keep the plastic off the leaves. Make sure the enclosed plants will not receive full sun as heat buildup may cook them. Bright, indirect light is best. Plants should keep for about a week with this method.

2. This method requires an old dish drying rack, a bathtub in a bathroom with some natural light.
and some shoelaces. Place the drying rack upside down in the tub and add several inches of water. Push one end of a shoelace through a drainage hole on the bottom of a pot and into the potting soil of your houseplant. The other end of the shoelace dangles into the water. What you have made is a wick system that will replace water in the pot as the plant uses it. Plants can last a couple of weeks if you have enough natural light.

3. There are numerous commercial products that can be used to automatically water houseplants in your absence. The advantage of these products is that the houseplant does not normally need to be moved. All require a reservoir from which water is either siphoned or pumped to individual houseplants. Houseplants should last as long as the water holds out. (Ward Upham)

**Sidedressing Chart Available**

Gregg Eyestone, Horticulture Agent from Riley County, has put together a nice chart that covers sidedressing nitrogen on annual flowers, certain perennial flowers, vegetables and various small fruit. Sidedressing (also called topdressing) is applying nitrogen fertilizer as plants are growing to give them an extra boost. Done correctly, sidedressing can improve vegetable, fruit and flower production. This will be especially important this year in areas that have received excessive rainfall as nitrogen has likely been lost. Gregg lists the crop, the amount of fertilizer needed, and suggested time of application. Rates are given for ammonium sulfate, urea and blood meal. You may find the chart at [http://tinyurl.com/hxtgres](http://tinyurl.com/hxtgres) (Ward Upham)

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