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TURFGRASS

Apply Late-Season Nitrogen Application in November



November is the time to give cool-season lawns the last nitrogen application of the season. Why November? Because while top growth slows in response to cool temperatures, grass plants are still making food (carbohydrates) by photosynthesis. A November nitrogen application helps boost the photosynthesis rate. Carbohydrates that are not used in growth are stored in the crown and other storage tissues in the plant. These carbohydrate reserves help the turfgrass green up earlier in the spring and

sustain growth into May without the need for early-spring (March or April) nitrogen. Those early-spring nitrogen applications are less desirable because they can lead to excessive shoot growth and reduced root growth. Other benefits of November-applied nitrogen for cool-season grasses include improved winter hardiness, root growth and shoot density.

How much should you apply? One to 1 to 1 ½ pounds actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn area is sufficient. In order for this application to be effective, the nitrogen must be readily available to the plant because the growing season is nearly over. Therefore, for a November application use a soluble (quickly-available) nitrogen carrier such as urea or ammonium sulfate. Many turfgrass fertilizers sold in garden centers and other retail outlets also contain soluble nitrogen. Avoid products that contain water-insoluble nitrogen (slow-release) for this application. As always, sweep up any fertilizer that gets on driveways, sidewalks, or streets and reapply it to the lawn. (WU)

Control Broadleaf Weeds in Lawns in Early November

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. Be sure to 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) is a relatively new herbicide and contains the three active ingredients mentioned above plus carfentrazone. It gives a quicker response than the other products mentioned and will work better when temperatures drop below 50 degrees. (WU)

ORNAMENTALS

Natural Needle Drop on Needled Evergreens



Pine, spruce, and various needled evergreens naturally drop needles during the fall. This is a process where interior needles turn yellow, then brown and eventually drop off. There are no spots or discolored bands on the affected needles. Those who aren't familiar with this process are often concerned about the health of the tree. This is a natural phenomenon that occurs every year and does not hurt the tree. Because this only affects older, interior needles, the tips of the branches look fine. Check to see that only the older needles are

affected – the needles on the tips of the branches should look fine – and that there is no spotting or banding on the needles that are turning yellow. If spotting or banding is noted, take a sample to your local K-State Research and Extension office for diagnosis. Natural needle drop is more noticeable during some years (such as this one in certain areas) than others. (WU)

FLOWERS

Winter Storage of Summer Bulbs

It is time to start thinking about storing 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 freezing temperatures have browned the foliage, then allowed to dry for about a week in a



shady, well-ventilated site, such as a garage or tool shed. Remove excess soil and pack them in peat moss, vermiculite or perlite. Make sure bulbs don't touch, so that if one decays the rot doesn't spread to its neighbors. 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. Finding a good spot may be difficult. Some people place them against the basement wall farthest from the furnace, and insulate them so the wall keeps them cool. (WU)

Clean up Iris Beds this Fall



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Irises are known for a couple of common problems: a fungus disease known as iris leaf spot and an insect named iris borer. Though both cause problems in the spring, now is the time to start control measures. Both the fungus and eggs of the borer overwinter on old, dead leaves. Removing dead iris leaves and other garden debris from the iris bed this fall reduces populations of these pests. This can significantly reduce problems next spring. (WU)

MISCELLANEOUS

Caring for Houseplants During the Winter



Houseplants need varying amounts of water and fertilizer at different times of the year. They need the most during summer when light levels are high and days are long. They need the least during the short days of winter. The primary reason for this is light. Light fuels plant growth. More light allows more growth, which results in a greater demand for water and nutrients. When light is limited, the need for water and nutrients decreases dramatically. Therefore, it becomes easy to overwater and overfertilize during the winter months. Excess

water and fertilizer can kill a plant by damaging the root system. Overwatering can suffocate roots by eliminating oxygen, and excess fertilizer can burn roots.

It is never wise to water on a set schedule. Rather, allow the potting soil to tell you when watering is needed. Check to see if the soil is moist 1-inch deep by inserting your finger into the potting mix. Don't water unless the mix is dry. Another method of determining when to water is the weight of the pot. Use the former method to determine how light the pot should be before watering.

Another common mistake homeowners make with houseplants is fertilizing during the winter in order to perk plants up. This is the exact opposite of what should be done. Remember it is a lack

of light that gives plants the doldrums, not a lack of fertilizer. Therefore, it is best not to fertilize at all during the middle of winter (December-January) and to fertilize sparingly during November and February (maybe 1/4 a normal rate). (WU)

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