

Horticulture 2011 Newsletter

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Video of the Week: Overseed Your Lawn

<http://www.youtube.com/user/KSREVideos#p/c/51/DQoQ9mCWw5s>

TURFGRASS

Grub Damage on Lawns



If your lawn has large dead patches, check to be sure that the damage has not been caused by grubs. This is easily done by pulling up handfuls of dead turf. If the turf comes up like a carpet, then you have grubs.

Treatments this late in the season are best done with trichlorfon (Dylox, Bayer 24-hr Grub Control). Products that contain imidacloprid (Bayer's Season-Long Grub Control and Grub-Ex) and halofenozide (Kill-a-Grub) are better applied earlier in the season as grub preventers. It is important that

this product be watered in immediately after application. Waiting as little as 24 hours can reduce effectiveness to the point that grubs are not controlled. Apply 1/4 inch of water to insure the insecticide reaches the grubs. (WU)

Fall Lawn Seeding Tips



The keys to successful lawn seeding are proper rates, even dispersal, good seed to soil contact, and proper watering. Evenness is best achieved by carefully calibrating the seeder or by adjusting the seeder to a low setting and making several passes to ensure even distribution. Seeding a little on the heavy side with close overlapping is better than missing areas altogether, especially for the bunch-type tall fescue, which does not spread. Multiple seeder passes in opposite directions should help avoid this problem.

A more serious error in seeding is using the improper rate. For tall fescue, aim for 6 to 8 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet for new areas and about half as much for overseeding or seeding areas in the shade. Using too much seed results in a lawn more prone to disease and damage from stress. The best way to avoid such a mistake is to determine the square footage of the yard first, and then calculate the amount of seed. Using too little seed can also be detrimental and result in clumpy turf that is not as visually pleasing.

Establishing good seed to soil contact is essential for good germination rates. Slit seeders achieve good contact at the time of seeding by dropping seed directly behind the blade that slices a furrow into the soil. Packing wheels then follow to close the furrow. The same result can be accomplished by using a verticut before broadcasting the seed, and then verticutting a second time.

Core aerators can also be used to seed grass. Go over an area at least three times in different directions, and then broadcast the seed. Germination will occur in the aeration holes. Because those holes stay moister than a traditional seedbed, this method requires less watering. If seeding worked soil, use light hand raking to mix the seed into the soil. A leaf rake often works better than a garden rake because it mixes seed more shallowly.

Water newly planted areas lightly, but often. Keep soil constantly moist but not waterlogged. During hot days, a new lawn may need to be watered three times a day. If watered less, germination will be slowed. Cool, calm days may require watering only every couple of days. As the grass plants come up, gradually decrease watering to once a week if there is no rain. Let the plants tell you when to water. If you can push the blades down and they don't spring back up quickly, the lawn needs water. Once seed sprouts, try to minimize how much traffic (foot, mower, dog, etc.) seeded areas receive until the seedlings are a little more robust and ready to be mowed. Begin mowing once seedlings reach 3 to 4 inches tall. (WU)

Overseeding a Lawn



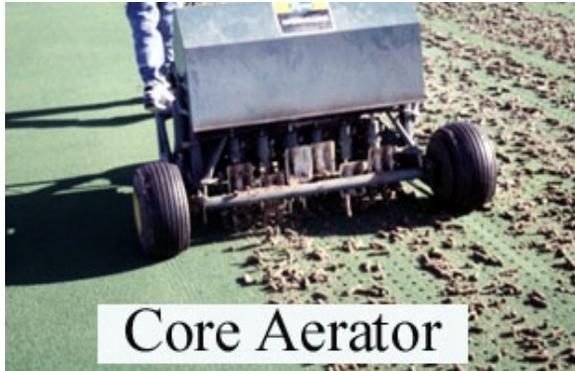
Tall fescue lawns that have become thin over the summer can be thickened up by overseeding during September. Start by mowing the grass short (1 to 1.5 inches) and removing the clippings. This will make it easier to achieve good seed-soil contact and increase the amount of light that will reach the young seedlings. Good seed-soil contact is vital if the overseeding is to be successful. Excess thatch can prevent seed from reaching the soil and germinating. Normally we want 1/4 inch of thatch or less when overseeding. If the thatch layer is 3/4

inch or more, it is usually easiest to use a sod cutter to remove it. A power rake can be used to reduce a thatch layer that is less than 3/4 inch but more than a quarter inch.

Once thatch is under control, the soil should be prepared for the seed. This can be done in various ways. A verticut machine has solid vertical blades that can be set to cut furrows in the soil. It is best to go two different directions with the machine. A slit seeder is a verticut machine with a seed hopper added so the soil prep and seeding operation are combined. A third option is to use a core aerator. These machines will punch holes in the soil and deposit the soil cores on the surface of the ground. Each hole produces an excellent environment for seed germination and growth. Make three to four passes with the core aerator to insure enough holes for the seed. Using a core aerator has the additional benefit of reducing the amount of watering needed to get the seed germinated and growing.

Aeration also increases the water infiltration rate, decreases compaction, and increases the amount of oxygen in the soil. Fertilizer should then be applied at the rate suggested by a soil test, or a starter fertilizer should be used at the rate suggested on the bag. Seeding is the next step and is usually done with half the amount of seed used when working with bare ground. For tall fescue, the normal rate is 6 to 8 pounds per 1,000 square feet, and so the overseeding rate is 3 to 4 pounds per 1,000 square feet. This should be broadcast over the prepared area. Water everything in and then keep the seedbed constantly moist to ensure rapid germination. Frequent, light waterings should give way to deeper and more infrequent irrigation as seedlings become established. Fertilize again 4 to 6 weeks after seeding to keep plants growing well and to build up food reserves. Use a high-nitrogen fertilizer. (WU)

Power Raking and Core-Aeration



September is the optimum time to power rake or core-aerate tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass lawns. These grasses should be coming out of their summer doldrums and beginning to grow more vigorously. This is a good time to consider what we are trying to accomplish with these practices.

Power raking is primarily a thatch control operation. It can be excessively damaging to the turf if not done carefully. For lawns with one-half inch of thatch or less, I don't recommend power raking. For those who are unsure what thatch is, it is a springy layer of light-brown organic matter that resembles peat moss and is located above the soil but below the grass foliage.

Core-aeration is a much better practice for most lawns. By removing cores of soil, core-aeration relieves compaction, hastens thatch decomposition, and improves water, nutrient, and oxygen movement into the soil profile. This operation should be performed when the soil is just moist enough so that it crumbles easily when worked between the fingers. Enough passes should be made so that the holes are spaced about 2 to 3 inches apart. Ideally, the holes should penetrate 2.5 to 3 inches deep. The cores can be left on the lawn to decompose naturally (a process that usually takes two or three weeks, depending on soil-type), or they can be broken up with a vertical mower set just low enough to nick the cores, and then dragged with a section of chain-link fence

or a steel doormat. The intermingling of soil and thatch is beneficial to the lawn. (WU)

ORNAMENTALS

Spring-flowering Plants Blooming in the Fall



Whenever we have a summer that puts a lot of stress on plants, bloom may appear on ornamentals that normally flower in the spring. We have noticed flowering on ornamental pear, lilac, and crabapple this fall. Fall flowering of plants is normally sparse and does not appreciably affect the amount of bloom the following spring. (WU)

PESTS

Lawn Moths = Sod Webworms



“Sod webworms” is an umbrella term which covers a wide range moth species whose larvae are potential turf pests. Certain species are predominant depending on geographical location. In Kansas, that species is *Parapediasia teterrella*. This species produces two generations per year. They overwinter as previous season’s second-generation larvae, which resume feeding in early spring. By mid-May, matured larvae pupate. This is followed by a moth flight that peaks toward mid-June. These first-generation moths produce eggs. After a six- to seven-week feeding period,

matured first-generation larva pupate. This is followed by the emergence of second-generation moths whose flight activities peak in mid-August. We are in the middle of the second-generation flight period now. These moths will produce eggs that will become second-generation overwintering larvae.

Sod webworm moths are commonly referred to as lawn moths. Moths fly during the evening hours dropping eggs into grassy areas. During the day, moths go undetected because of their small size (less than ½-inch long) and their habit of resting on and being hidden in lower portions of grass plants/blades. About the only time people become aware of moth activities is when moths are disturbed as people walk across/through grassy areas or when mowing lawns. Webworms may be present, but when population levels are low, healthy, lush lawns can absorb feeding damage. Treatment is not necessary unless the lawn has suffered frequent damage. Homeowners should not be overly concerned if they see lawn moth activity as they walk in their

yards. Sod webworm moths are weak flyers, moving a couple feet at a time. (BB)

Mayflies in August?



Yes. There are many different species that emerge at various times through the season. Mayflies belong to the order Ephemeroptera – ephemeral describing their brief lives as adults. Some species do not live for more than 24 hours, just long enough to mate and lay eggs.

As aquatic insects, Mayfly nymphs are called naiads. They have gill-like structures for breathing. Mayflies are an important food source for fish, amphibians, crawdads, and other insect predators associated with water.

Mayflies can emerge in great numbers. They have been reported to pile up more than 3 feet deep, covering roadways and causing cars to slip off into ditches. (BB)

MISCELLANEOUS

Overwatering Problems



Plants can be helped through hot, dry conditions with timely watering. We have seen a significant amount of overwatering this year. Plant roots need oxygen just as much as they need water. Soils that become waterlogged have very little oxygen and roots can literally drown. Be sure to allow the soil to drain and begin to dry between deep waterings. (WU)

New Publication on Pruning Shrubs



We have a new publication titled “Pruning Shrubs” now available. The two- page fact sheet covers when to prune and methods such as light pruning, shearing, heading back, thinning and renewal pruning. It is available online at <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/hort2/mf2998.pdf> or may be picked up at your local county extension office. The publication number is MF2998. (WU)

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