

## FERTILIZE STRAWBERRIES

An August application of nitrogen on spring-bearing strawberries is important in order to increase the number of strawberries produced next spring. Plenty of daylight and warm temperatures during June, July and August promotes the growth of new runner, or daughter, plants. As daylight hours dwindle and temperatures grow cooler in September and October, fruit buds for the next year's fruit crop develop. To get a good berry crop next spring, it is important for strawberry plants to be vigorous during this period of fruit bud development. Nitrogen, applied mid August, will help promote fruit bud development. A general application rate is ½ to ¾ pound of actual nitrogen per 100 feet of row. The nitrogen may be in the form of a fertilizer mixture such as ammonium phosphate or 12-12-12, or in a fertilizer containing only nitrogen such as urea or ammonium nitrate.

Some specific examples would include:

Iron + (11-0-0) at 6 pounds per 100 feet of row.

12-12-12 at 5.5 pounds per 100 feet of row.

Nitrate of Soda (16-0-0) at 4 pounds per 100 feet of row

Ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) at 3 pounds per 100 feet of row

Urea (46-0-0) at 1.5 pounds per 100 feet of row

After spreading the fertilizer, sprinkle the area applying at least a half-inch of water to move the nitrogen into the strawberry root areas.

## ***Green June Beetle***

These large beetles feed on sweet corn, blackberries, and peaches. They look much like the common May beetle, or June bug, but have a dull, velvety green color. The underside is more of an iridescent green. These beetles have poor navigational skills and seem to fly until they hit something. They also make a buzzing sound somewhat like a bumblebee. Unfortunately, they are also about the size of a bumblebee and so cause concern for many gardeners even though they cannot harm people. As noted above, they may damage crops. A number of general-use insecticides, including malathion, may be used to discourage feeding.

## ***Tomatoes and Stinkbugs***

Stinkbugs are the shield-shaped insects that emit a foul odor when disturbed. This insect injures the tomato by using its mouthparts to probe through the skin of the fruit. Look for tomatoes with golden-yellow, pink or white spots on the fruit as the fruit ripens. Color development is affected where probing occurs, which results in the off color, cloudy spots. Heavy feeding causes spots to spread, so tomatoes may develop a golden color. If you look closely, you can see the pinprick-sized puncture wounds in the middle of the spots. Hard, whitish, callous tissue develops beneath the skin at the area of wounding. By the time you see the spots, stinkbugs are often gone, so control's impossible. Affected tomatoes are safe to eat.

## ***Pay Attention to "Other Crop" on the Grass Seed Label***

Fall planting time is close at hand, so it's time to talk about grass seed. Many people have the idea that all grass seed is basically the same. Big mistake! Choosing quality seed is one of the most important steps in successfully planting or overseeding your lawn. If you don't know what to look for, you may be introducing unwanted intruders into that new stand. In particular, we are concerned with seed contaminated with orchardgrass and/or rough bluegrass (also known by its Latin name, *Poa trivialis*, or *Poa triv* for short). These are both perennial grassy weeds that cannot be selectively controlled once they are in a lawn. Orchardgrass is a problem because it is faster growing and lighter green than our turfgrasses. It is a bunch grass and so doesn't spread, but infested areas are still unsightly due to small tufts of this species pockmarking the lawn. Rough bluegrass is fine-textured and forms circular patches in the lawn. It blends in fairly well until summertime heat causes it to turn brown rapidly. If the rough bluegrass would just die in the heat, it would only be a temporary problem. Unfortunately, it usually just goes dormant, turning green again with cooler temperatures and rain.

Buying quality seed starts with knowing how to decipher the seed label. One of the most important things to look for is listed as "% other crop." "Other crop" refers to any species that is intentionally grown for some purpose. That would include turfgrasses (those species other than the one you are buying) and pasture grasses. Orchardgrass and rough bluegrass both are listed as "other crop" seed. Seed labels are required by law to show the percentage (by weight) of "other crop" in the bag, but unless a species constitutes 5% or more, the label doesn't have to list each species by name. How much "other crop" is too much? That's a difficult question to answer, but the tolerance is very low. It depends on what the "other crop" actually is, and the quality expectations of the buyer. In practice, "other crop" may refer to something relatively harmless, like a small amount of perennial ryegrass in a bag of tall fescue, or it may refer to something bad, like rough bluegrass or orchardgrass. The homeowner really has no easy way of knowing what the "other crop" is, although there are some hints. If it is something bad, less than ½ of 1% can ruin a bag of seed. Obviously, if your expectations are high for the area you are planting, you would want the "other crop" to be as close to zero as possible. Good quality seed will often have 0.01% "other crop" or less.