

## PREPARATIONS FOR FALL LAWN PLANTINGS

If you are planning on overseeding or establishing a Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue lawn this fall, preparations should start now. These preparations include taking a soil test and controlling weeds if necessary. A soil test will determine what nutrients are needed. Unless phosphorus levels are high, a starter fertilizer is recommended to encourage rapid germination of grass seed. Once the soil test results are received, the proper fertilizer can be purchased so it can be applied at seeding. Many areas of Kansas have received sufficient rainfall this summer that weeds, especially crabgrass, may interfere with seeding. If a lawn is being completely redone and weeds are a problem, a product with glyphosate such as Roundup or Killzall can be used to kill everything. Glyphosate is inactivated when it hits the soil and will not be taken up by underground roots. Avoid spraying exposed roots or leaves of any "good" plant. Wait at least two weeks before seeding. Overseeding is used to thicken up a lawn. Normally we have bare spots that need to be filled in or a thin lawn that needs thickened up. We do not kill the tall fescue or bluegrass when overseeding. Therefore, we cannot use glyphosate to control weeds as it would also kill the turfgrass. Instead we use a selective herbicide that will control both broadleaf weeds and crabgrass. A number of those are listed below. Note that there is a waiting period between when the herbicide is applied and when it is safe to overseed. Usually this is about four weeks. However, check the label of the product you purchased to be sure you allow enough time.

Ortho Weed B Gon Max + Crabgrass Control

Bayer All in One Lawn Weed and Crabgrass Killer.

Fertilome Weed Out with Q

Trimec Crabgrass Plus Lawn Weed Killer

Bonide Weed Beater Plus Crabgrass & Broadleaf Weed Killer

Spectracide Weed Stop for Lawns Plus Crabgrass Killer

### ***Killing Bermudagrass***

This is a tough one for most folks. Bermudagrass is a great performer for us as a lawn turfgrass, it is drought tolerant, aggressive in its growth so it covers fast, and it spreads and recovers from wear without having to be re-seeded. Those are the good points about bermudagrass and these qualities translate to problems if you don't want it in your yard. Unfortunately we cannot selectively kill bermudagrass out of a planting of another turfgrass. The only product available to homeowners that does an effective job of killing bermudagrass is Glyphosate, which is the active ingredient of Round-Up and Killzall to name two. Understanding how Glyphosate works will help greatly in your efforts to control or kill bermudagrass. First of all, Glyphosate products come in different strengths. Some ready-to-use products may only contain 1 to 1 and ½ % Glyphosate, and the most potent concentrates may contain over 40%. This can lead to a lot of confusion with some homeowners. Glyphosate is a great product if used correctly and the percentage of A.I. (Active Ingredient) coincides with the recommended amount. To effectively kill bermudagrass it is recommended to use 4 ounces of a 40% or 41% A.I. product per gallon of water, this is the strongest mix of glyphosate recommended for any weed control. Another characteristic of Glyphosate is how it works, it is not a burn down product, it is a systemic. This means that the herbicide is absorbed through the leaf and then it is translocated throughout the plant, through the leaves, stems and finally root system to kill out the entire plant from the root up. This indicates a couple of things for users, one is that you have to give the product time to work, at 90 degrees F 7 days should be enough for the plant to move the Glyphosate down through the root system. The second is that you need to maximize the leaf surface for maximum absorption of the herbicide. This is necessary because bermudagrass has such an extensive root system. The more leaf surface available to spray, the more herbicide you can get into the plant to kill it out. So don't mow for at least a week prior to applying Glyphosate. So the common mistakes that are made when using Glyphosate are mowing prior to use and thus effectively reducing the amount of leaf surface available to spray, mowing or trimming right after spraying, this removes the herbicide before it can move through the entire plant, and not mixing it strong

enough to do the job. Glyphosate works great for us as long as we understand the way it works and how to best apply it to accomplish our purposes. Glyphosate is not active in the soil, it has to be applied to a green, growing leaf, so carry-over contamination is not a problem. It is completely safe to plant where it has been used as soon as the targeted weeds have died. The timing for killing bermudagrass prior to a early September planting of Fescue is anytime in mid to late August. This will leave your lawn bare of turf cover for a minimum amount of time.

## ***Turf in Shade***

We are often asked, "What's the best shade grass for Kansas?" The answer is simple but requires explanation. Tall fescue is the best shade grass for Kansas. That does not mean that tall fescue is the best shade grass of all those grown. True fine leaf fescues such as sheep's fescue and creeping red fescue are actually better adapted to shade than tall fescue, but they have difficulty surviving Kansas summers. It's better to say that tall fescue is the best shade grass adapted to Kansas conditions. Although tall fescue is our best shade grass that does not mean that tall fescue is all that good in the shade. Large trees that produce deep shade will not allow tall fescue to survive over the long term. I say "over the long term" because fall-planted cool-season grasses will often do well under shade trees through the fall and spring when there is less leaf cover and growing conditions are better (cooler and moister) than in the summer. We often see people plant tall fescue in the shade each fall and then wonder what happens the following summer. The answer is stress from multiple fronts. Sunlight that passes through the leaves of trees has had most of the "good" light that drives photosynthesis stripped out. The grass struggles to make the food it needs for survival and growth. When this is combined with the additional stresses of drought and heat and competition from tree roots for moisture and nutrients, tall fescue is unable to survive. So, what should you do if you have too much shade for your turf? You have three choices. Reduce the shade by pruning up the lower branches of your trees so more early and late sun reaches the turf. A second option is to plant a shade loving groundcover such as vinca periwinkle. Another solution would be to mulch the area under the tree.

## ***Pear Harvest***

Pears should not be allowed to ripen on the tree. They should be picked while still firm and ripened after harvest. Tree-ripened fruits are often of poor quality because of the development of grit cells and the browning and softening of the inner flesh. Commercial growers determine the best time to harvest pears by measuring the decrease in fruit firmness as the fruit matures. This varies with growing conditions and variety. A Magness meter is used for testing and measures the pressure needed to push a 5/16-inch tip a specified distance into an individual fruit. Home gardeners can use these other indicators:

1. *A change in the fruit ground color* from a dark green to light green or yellowish green. The ground color is the "background" color of the fruit.
2. *Fruit should part easily* from the branch when it is lifted up and twisted.
3. *Corking over of lenticels*. Lenticels are the "breathing pores" of the fruit. They start out as a white to greenish white color and turn brown due to corking as the fruit nears maturity. They look like brown "specks" on the fruit.
4. *Development of characteristic pear aroma* and taste of sampled fruit.

Pears ripen in one to three weeks after harvest if held at 60 to 65 degrees F. They can then be canned or preserved. If you wish to store some for ripening later, fresh-picked fruit should be placed in cold storage at 29 to 31degrees F and 90 percent humidity. Ripen small amounts as needed by moving them to a warmer location and holding them at 60 to 65 degrees F. Storing at too high a temperature (75 degrees F and higher) results in fruit breaking down without ripening.

## **Twig Girdlers**

We are starting to see damage from twig girdlers as evidenced by fallen twigs up to 3 feet long. The beetle *Oncideres cingulata* is most likely the culprit. Host trees include elm, oak, linden, hackberry, apple, pecan, persimmon, poplar, sour gum, honey locust, dogwood, and some flowering fruit trees. This insect is distributed throughout the eastern United States from New England to Florida and as far west as Kansas and Arizona. Adults are long-horned beetles with a grayish-brown bodies that are stout and cylindrical. The larvae are also cylindrical with small heads and shiny exteriors. Larvae can be up to an inch long and are light brown to brownish-gray.

Girdled twigs often remain on the tree until a strong wind blows them down. Large infestations can result in a high percentage of girdled twigs. Though this may reduce the vigor and appearance of the tree, the overall effect on the tree's health is not severe. Twigs are unsightly and do not fall all at once, so clean up is a drawn out process. This beetle has a one-year life cycle. Late in the growing season, the female deposits eggs in small scars chewed through the bark and then chews a continuous notch around the twig, girdling it. The notch is cut below the site of egg deposition apparently because the larva is unable to complete development in the presence of large amounts of sap. Girdled twigs die and fall to the ground where the eggs hatch.

Girdled twigs look like a beaver has chewed on them, only in miniature. The outside of the twig is smoothly cut, but the center of the twig appears broken. The larvae begin feeding on dead wood inside the twigs the following spring and continue through most of the summer. Pupation takes place inside the feeding cavity. Development is completed during August when the adult emerges to repeat the cycle. Though adults feed on the bark of host twigs, damage is minimal until the female starts girdling. Chemical control is impractical, so gather and dispose of fallen twigs in the fall or spring to destroy the larvae inside. Often, natural mortality is high because fallen twigs are excessively dry or carry too many larvae per twig.