

## The Grapevine

### Fall Cool Season Lawn Care

August is already almost half-way over (hard to believe) and we are fast approaching the time of year when cool season lawns will need some work to get and keep them in tip top shape for the next growing season. Fall is the most important time to fertilize and the best time to re-seed or over seed your cool season lawn. Let's talk about some important activities for the month of September.

September is the most important time of year to fertilize your lawn with a high nitrogen fertilizer. Fall is the time when grasses are working on growing a root system and storing nutrients to make it through the winter. In the fall use a quick release type of fertilizer to give the plants a boost going into the winter. It's important to note that you should be watering your lawn so it is actively growing, especially this year where it has been so hot and dry. Never fertilize your lawn when the grass is dormant as the grass will not be able to take up the nutrients and they will be lost. Both Tall Fescue and Kentucky Bluegrass lawns should be fertilized with 1-1.5 pounds of Nitrogen per 1000 square feet. in September. You can also fertilize the lawn again in November.

Fall is the best time to re-seed cool season lawns. The grasses have adequate time to get established before winter arrives but you also won't have to water as much because the temperature is cooler with the potential for more frequent rains. Test the soil before you plan to plant the seed so you can add the appropriate nutrients to the soil prior to planting. To re-seed a lawn, spray the area several weeks before to kill the existing grass and weeds. You may have to spray several times to make sure you have killed the whole area so be sure to start early enough to allow for this. Once every thing is dead, mow the area as short as possible and bag the clippings to make it easier for the grass seed to contact the soil. Tilling lightly on the surface is also an option depending on the size of the area, you don't have to till it very deep just rough up the soil surface. Seed the grass according to the recommended rate for that type of grass. Keep the area damp until the seeds have started to germinate then slowly back off on watering as the grass grows. Mow the grass once it reached the optimal height for that type of grass.



This summer has been especially hard on lawns and it might be necessary to over-seed this fall. To prepare the area mow the lawn at 1-1.5" in height and bag the clippings to allow for good seed to ground contact. If there is a heavy thatch build up remove the thatch either with a rake or you can rent a power rake to remove the thatch. You should then use one of these three methods to further prepare the soil:

- A verticut machine has solid vertical blades that can be set to cut furrows in the soil.
- A slit seeder is a type of verticut machine that can prep the soil and drop seeds in the same pass.
- A core aerator punches holes in the soil and deposits the soil cores on the surface of the ground.

Of the three the slit seeder is probably preferred because you can do it all in one pass but any of the above options will work. Once the ground is prepared and seeded care for the grass like you would a new lawn area.

Even though our grasses are probably looking a little rough right now we can take several steps this fall to ensure that they are in tip top shape for the coming growing season. If you aren't already be sure to water your lawn at least a ½" every week or two to keep the crowns of the grass alive. Happy Growing!!!

### Pollinator Plant of the Week-

This week's pollinator plant of the week is *Agastache cana* also known as hyssop or Hummingbird mint. This beautiful plant is a native of the mountains of New Mexico and western Texas where it grows at approximately 6000' above sea level. Hummingbird mint is a member of the mint family and grows as a herbaceous woody-based perennial. A spring to summer bloomer, humming bird mint has sweet smelling rose pink to raspberry pink flowers on erect saliva like flowering spikes. An easy plant to grow, this hardy perennial tolerates sun, heat and drought conditions once it's established along with poor soil conditions. This beauty grows 1.5-3' tall and 1-2' wide. Hummingbird mint works well in rock gardens, containers, as a border plant or in hummingbird and butterfly gardens. The plant is said to repel mosquitos and can be rubbed on the skin to keep mosquito's away. The leaves can also be used either fresh or dried in teas. There are several members of the *Agastache* family that are loved by pollinators of all kinds.



### Insect of the Week-

This week's insect is the Cicada Killer. The Eastern Cicada Killer is the largest wasp that occurs in the state of Kansas and is a native of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains and down into Mexico. This large wasp can be up to an inch and a half in length and weigh up to a gram. The adults have a rust to brown colored head with a black abdomen with three yellow bands. These wasps are often found congregating in the same areas giving the appearance of a hive however that is simply because they are attracted to the same type of location for nesting. Cicada killers are solitary wasps with the females digging a burrow in the ground and hunting to feed the young. The female will dig up to 4 burrows in her lifetime which can be up to 40" deep and contain up to 16 chambers for young. These wasps hunt cicadas for food and will kill 100 or more cicadas in her lifetime. Females will sting the cicada to stun and kill it then drag it into the burrow and leave one cicada with her male offspring and two to three with the females. She will then lay an egg and the young will eat the cicadas over approximately 4 days before spinning a cocoon to wait till next spring where they pupate and emerge as adults. Control is usually not necessary as the males cannot sting and the females will rarely sting. The nests can occasionally damage turf and small plants but spraying is usually not needed. Spray can be applied directly to the entrance of the burrow if needed but if the adults have left the larvae will likely survive to hatch next year.



### Reminders-

- Plant broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and similar plants now in their final locations.
- Water lawns and flower beds 1-2 times or approximately ½-1" of moisture every week.
- Scout for Fall Armyworms. They haven't been spotted yet but early detection prevents more damage.
- Spray areas to seed cool season grasses now to plant in September. Water a few days before spraying for the best results.

### Upcoming Events

- August 18th, 2022: Fall Gardening- Bradford Memorial Library  
Growing a garden doesn't just stop once the tomatoes and squash are planted in the spring. There are many crops that can be grown in the fall. Some vegetables such as broccoli, kale and carrots are actually better tasting if planted in the fall. Class starts at 6:30.
- August 20, 2022: Nature in your Neighborhood- An Urban Conservation Workshop  
This workshop will cover a variety of topics from how to choose the best tree or plant for your location to composting and improving your backyard for our native pollinators and birds. Join the Butler County Master Gardeners, the Butler County Conservation District and K-State Research and Extension for Nature in Your Neighborhood, an environmental stewardship partnership. Call our office at 316-321-9660 to register to make a rain barrel. Rain barrels are limited to the first 25 to register. Cost is \$15 for the rain barrel, workshops are free.