The Grapevine

Fall Cool Season Lawn Care

September has officially arrived and while the temperatures don’t feel like fall yet it looks like cooler weather and some rain is in our forecast. In our area, fall is the most important time to fertilize and the best time to re-seed or over seed your cool season lawn to set it up for success next year. Remember the best way to combat disease, insect and weed issues is a healthy, thick yard so a little work this fall can save you more work next year. 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 again in November if your lawn needs it.

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 everything 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.

The last couple years have been really hard on our lawns with the heat and drought conditions, especially the drought through last winter. 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 crows of the grass alive. If we continue to stay dry through the winter be sure to water your lawn periodically to keep it alive through the spring. Happy Growing!!!
**Issue of the Week- Fall Needle Drop**

Every fall pine trees, arborvitae and spruce trees shed their inner needles in a process called "Needle Drop". While to many, seeing the 2-4 year old needles turn brown and then drop off of their evergreen trees might be concerning, this is a natural normal occurrence as the tree sheds needles that are no longer productive. Every year we receive calls from concerned homeowners about the dying needles on the inner portion of their pines, spruce and arborvitae. The inner needles will start to turn yellow to brown and then slowly fall off throughout the fall and into winter. As long as the inner needles are the only one that are turning colors your tree most likely is fine. If the outer needles start to turn brown or there is banding of different colors noted on the needles that could be a sign your tree has pine wilt or a needle blight. On years when the tree has been under stress, such as hot and dry years or even years where it has been abnormally wet, this process can be more noticeable and cause more concern. Where we are going into our second fall in the current drought and with all the heat forecasted try to water your evergreens through this fall and especially through the winter if we have dry conditions. Watering will help reduce the amount of stress your plants are under and can help keep them from dying should the dry conditions continue. If you are concerned that your tree has a problem please feel free to contact our office and we can take a look.

**Insect of the Week- Blister Beetles**

While we most commonly think of blister beetles being a pest in hay crops, especially for horses, these insects can be a major pest of vegetable gardens. There are several different species of blister beetles in Kansas and they range in size from ½ to ¾ of an inch long and in color from black to gray to brown striped. No matter what size or color, blister beetles can be identified by their elongated, narrow, cylindrical bodies with the middle body being narrower than the head of the wing covers. These beetles can quickly strip vegetables, especially tomatoes, within a couple days if there are enough of them. These insects tend to congregate in groups on flowers and leaves of plants in the families Amaranthaceae, Asteraceae, Fabaceae and Solanaceae. Blister beetles get their common name because the beetles contain a substance called cantharidin which can cause large, erect, watery blisters. If you have a few blister beetles you can removed them and drop them in a bucket of soapy water but be sure to wear gloves when handling them to prevent injury. If there are large numbers of these insects chemical control maybe your only option. Use products with the active ingredient’s permethrin, pyrethroids, cyfluthrin or bifenthrin. Unfortunately, other than removing the beetles and squishing them or putting them in soapy water there aren’t any cultural control methods that are effective for them.

**Pollinator Plant of the Week- Joe Pye Weed**

*Eutrochium maculatum* is a native, herbaceous, perennial wildflower that is commonly called Joe Pye Weed or Queen of the Meadow. This native is known for its clusters of purple flowers that bloom through spring and fall and are attractive to a variety of different pollinators. Joe Pye weed grows four to seven feet tall and three to four feet wide. This native prefers average to wet soils in full sun but it will tolerate some afternoon shade in hot climates. In its native habitat Joe Pye weed would be found in wet meadows or marshy locations. This plant forms small colonies via rhizomes but can easily be divided to replant into new locations. Use Joe Pye Weed as a background plant for pollinator plantings, native cottage gardens or in locations where deer are an issue as it is resistant to deer damage. Keep the soil consistently moist for this plant as it is not drought hardy and the leaves may burn in hot climates if the soil is allowed to dry out for an extended period of time.
Video of the week: Planting for Spring Color
Fall is the time to plant spring flowering bulbs such as tulips and daffodils. This segment has tips on what kind of bulbs to buy and includes step-by-step instructions on how to plant them for a burst of color next spring. Watch the video here: https://kansashealthyyards.org/all-videos/video/bulbs-planting-for-spring-color

Greek Zucchini Boats
Ingredients
- 3 zucchini, sliced and seeds removed
- 1 tablespoon olive or canola oil
- ¼ cup quinoa
- ½ cup water
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon dried basil
- ¼ teaspoon oregano
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, sliced
- ¼ cup diced red onion
- ½ cup chickpeas, drained and rinsed, low sodium
- ¼ cup feta cheese
- 2 tablespoons green onions, chopped

Dressing for quinoa mix:
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons olive or canola oil

DIRECTIONS
1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Line a baking pan with parchment paper or use non-stick cooking spray. Wash, dry and cut zucchini into halves. Scoop out the flesh of the zucchini with a spoon. Drizzle zucchini with 1 Tbsp. of olive or canola oil. Bake 25 to 30 minutes until tender.
2. While zucchini is cooking, combine the quinoa and water and cook by following the directions on the package. Drain any excess water from quinoa, then add garlic powder, dried basil, oregano, grape tomatoes, red onion, chickpeas and feta to the mixture and combine all ingredients. Mix oil and lemon juice in a separate container, then add to the quinoa mixture. Fill zucchini with mixture. Top with green onions. Refrigerate until chilled.

(Source: https://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/recipes/greek-zucchini-boats)
Reminders:
- Divide Peonies
- Fertilize strawberry plants
- Remove small tomatoes or prune the tips of the tomatoes back to encourage larger tomatoes to ripen
- Harvest winter squash when the rind is hard enough it isn’t easily punctured by a fingernail

Upcoming Events

- **September 6th at Noon - Seed Saving from your Garden**
  Seed saving is a fun way to enjoy gardening without breaking the bank. Most plants produce seeds that can be saved from one year to the next, however, not all seeds are equally suited for saving. Jesse Gilmore, Wildcat Extension District Horticulture Extension Agent, will discuss the merits of seed saving, the different types of flowers and seeds, and which plants are most suited to seed saving. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: [https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/](https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/)

- **September 14th at 6 pm - Winter Care of Houseplants - Bradford Memorial Library in El Dorado**
  Over 66% of U.S. households have at least one houseplant, but often the terms used to describe their care can be confusing. Decode common houseplant terms related to light, water, and other plant needs. Learn about some unique houseplants and the best practices to keep them thriving. Join us at the Bradford Memorial Library (611 S. Washington St. El Dorado, KS) at 6 pm for this free webinar. There will be free cuttings of some houseplants given away!

- **October 4th at Noon - Putting your Garden to Bed: Winter Garden Prep**
  The growing season is nearly over, but your garden work may not be done just yet. Join Anthony Reardon, West Plains District Horticulture Extension Agent, as you learn about all of the various gardening tasks that can help your landscape throughout the winter and prepare your garden for the growing season to come. This class is offered online via Zoom. For more information on the Garden Hour series or to register visit here: [https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/](https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/consumer-horticulture/garden-hour/)

- **October 15th from Noon to 4 pm - Houseplant and Perennial Plant Swap**
  Have your houseplants grown like crazy this year and need a trim or did you divide some perennials and have extras? Bring your plants to the Plant Swap hosted by the Butler County Master Gardeners. The rules are simple: 1) Bring at least one plant, cutting or seeds to trade or sell, 2) All swaps must be labeled with plant name, 3) All plants must be pest and disease free. This event is free to attend, just bring your favorite plants to share with plant lovers in your community!!! Register so we can have enough tables: [https://forms.gle/ddB6As2f53Cf9PZa9](https://forms.gle/ddB6As2f53Cf9PZa9)