

The Grapevine

Spring Lawn Care

Spring has finally arrived, at least according to the calendar, who knows what Mother Nature has in store for us for the next month or so. Over the last week the warm weather has had cool season lawns starting to green up and even my warm season lawn is showing some small signs of life. As our lawns start to grow it's time to start thinking about lawn care this spring. Growing up my parents had a beautiful Kentucky Bluegrass yard but they did a fair amount of maintenance to keep it looking great all summer. During my time with extension and as a homeowner I have found your lawn can be as high or as low maintenance as you want it to be. Let's take a look at some basic lawn care principles you should be thinking about right now.

Early spring is still a bit too early to be fertilizing or applying crabgrass preventer to the yard we can still start to control some of our early sprouting weeds. As a side note, it's best to apply that when the Redbud trees are in full bloom. As with anything in the lawn you can make your weed control as strict or as relaxed as you want. Growing up and even now my parents diligently applied crabgrass preventer, sprayed for dandelions and tried to control as many of the weeds as they could. They take great pride in having a beautiful green lawn all year long with as few weeds as possible. I tend to let some of the weeds go in most of my lawn but I do try to control some of the problem weeds such as crabgrass, stickers and bindweed in my yard. I prefer to feed the bees first thing in the spring versus killing the dandelions or henbit. March is an excellent time to spot spray some broad leaf weeds as they start to appear and with most of our perennials and other landscape plants dormant it is easier to control weeds near flower beds. If you decide to spray for weeds, pick days that are above 50 degrees with no rain forecast for at least 24 hours to improve the effectiveness of the spray.



Spring is a common time when people think about applying fertilizer to their lawns. Fall is ultimately the best time to apply fertilizer to our lawns, but late spring applications will help the lawn stay green and grow during the summer. It's best to wait till May to apply fertilizer to a cool-season lawn while warm season lawns shouldn't be fertilized till May or June. Unfortunately, we can often only find crabgrass preventer with fertilizer mixed in so our lawns get fertilized in April instead of May. That will work, it just might not be as effective. I usually don't apply fertilizer in the spring unless I missed a fall application simply because fertilizing in the spring leads to faster grass growth and more mowing. I want a thick healthy lawn, but more fertilizer leads to needing more water which in turn leads to needing more mowing. You could say I'm a slightly lazy lawn owner but I would rather put more effort into my flowerbeds and garden versus having that perfect lawn. Warm season lawns can be fertilized one to four times a year from May to August 15th depending on what type of grass you have. If you only plan one application apply fertilizer in June, two applications- apply fertilizer once in both May and July, three applications-apply fertilizer in May, June and early August, and four applications-apply each month from May to August.

Ultimately your lawn will take the amount of care and maintenance that you are willing to put into it. I tend to take the middle ground with some fertilization and weed control while one of my friends does the minimum and my parents will always follow the maximum recommendations when they can. It all depends on what your preference and the amount of time you have to put into your lawn. No matter what your plans are it is time to start thinking about lawn maintenance and getting ready for the grass to get greener as the temperatures get warmer. A side reminder, the best defense against weeds in your lawn is a dense, healthy lawn. Hopefully we are done with the snow and really cold temperatures but we do live in Kansas so you never know. Happy Growing everyone!!

Reminders-

- Once temperatures are consistently over 50 degrees or when plants start growing clean up the perennial bed by cutting back foliage and removing the winter mulch layer. Divide any perennials and plant back in the garden.
- It's not too late to start tomato and pepper seeds!
- Check your houseplants for unwanted visitors. It's also time to start transplanting your houseplants and fertilizing them as they begin to actively grow with the longer days.
- Remove last years growth from your asparagus beds. You can pull or cut the old fronds or you can mow the old growth off.
- It's time to plant your potatoes, peas and other frost hardy vegetables outside.

Upcoming Events

- *April 6, 2022: Pollinator Plants for Continuous Food Sources*
Include plants for pollinators in your spring planting plan! Providing season-long pollen and nectar sources in the garden is critical for our pollinators to forage on, and an important way to help increase local pollinator numbers. Join Jason Graves, Central Kansas District Horticulture Extension Agent, to learn about the planting strategies and pollinator garden plants that will help you supply pollinators with the critical foraging habitat they need. For more information on KSRE Garden Hour [click here](#).