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THERE'S ALWAYS TIME FOR SUBERIZATION!!!***Time to Plant Potatoes Approaching***

St. Patrick's Day is just around the corner, so it is time to get seed potatoes in the ground. Actually any time from mid- to late-March is fine for potato planting. Be sure to buy seed potatoes rather than using those bought for cooking. Seed potatoes are certified disease free and have plenty of starch to sprout as quickly as soil temperatures allow. Most seed potatoes can be cut into four pieces, though large potatoes may yield more, and small less. Each seed piece should be between 1.5 and 2 ounces. Seed pieces this size will have more than one eye. Each pound of potatoes should yield 8 to 10 seed pieces. Cut the seed potatoes 2 to 3 days before planting so freshly cut surfaces have a chance to *suberize*, or toughen, and form a protective coating. Storing seed in a warm location during *suberization* will speed the process. Plant each seed piece about 1 to 2 inches deep and 8 to 12 inches apart in rows. Though it is important to plant potatoes in March, emergence is slow. It is often mid- to late-April before new plants poke their way through the soil. As the potatoes grow, pull soil up to the base of the plants. New potatoes are borne above the planted seed piece, and it is important to keep sunlight from hitting the new potatoes. Exposed potatoes will turn green and produce a poisonous substance called solanine. Keeping the potatoes covered will prevent this.

Bees - Pollinators and Pesticides Program

Bees and other pollinators play a significant role in our well-being. Without them and the work that they do we would live in a much different world. Not every plant or crop is reliant on bees and other pollinators, but the list starts with Apples and goes through Zucchini. It is difficult to overstate their importance to agriculture and feeding the people of this world.

There will be a program on ***Pollinators and Pesticides at the 4-H Bldg in El Dorado on Tuesday, March 20th, at 6:30 PM.*** Dr. Raymond Cloyd, K-State Entomologist, will begin the evening with his talk on Pesticides and Bees. What can be used, methods to lessen pesticide/bee interactions, and the different modes of action and what they mean to beekeeping and honey production. The second part of the program will be given by Pam Paulsen, K-State Horticulture agent in Reno County. Pam will present information on how to attract bees and other pollinators, such as Monarch butterflies, what plants to plant that provide them with the food they need, and the care needed for them. There will be a ***\$8 fee*** for this program and light refreshments will be served. ***To register call the Butler County Extension office at (316)321-9660 by March 16th.***

Use Wide Rows for Certain Vegetables

Lettuce, radishes and spinach are planted early enough that weeds are usually not a problem. Therefore gardeners can plant a wide row and get more production out of a small space. How

wide? Usually 12 to 18 inches is about right. Leaving aisles between wide rows allows for convenient harvesting. Seed can be planted in several rows close together to make a wide row but it is easier to scatter seeds uniformly over the area. After seeding, tamp down the row lightly with the back of a hoe to eliminate air pockets. Then pull soil from the sides of the row with the back of a garden rake to cover the seed. One-quarter inch of soil over the seed should be good.

Be careful to not sow too densely as too much competition can stunt plants. Space seed according to the instructions on the seed packet. If you do happen to sow too thickly, plants can be thinned later. It is best to go back to a single row for later crops for easier weed control.

Cut Back Ornamental Grasses

March is a good time to remove dead foliage from ornamental grasses. Grasses green up earlier if foliage is removed and are more attractive without a mixture of dead and live leaves. A number of tools can be used including hand clippers, weed whips (if the foliage is of a small enough diameter), weed whips with a circular blade, or even a chain saw. Use the top of the chainsaw bar to cut so the saw doesn't pull in debris and clog. Also, it is often helpful to tie foliage together before cutting so it doesn't interfere and is easier to dispose of. Burning is another option - but only if it is safe and legal to do so. Note that these grasses may not burn long, but they burn extremely hot. Even so, the crown of the plant is not damaged and new growth appears relatively quickly. If the center of the clump shows little growth, the plant would benefit from division. Dig up the entire clump and separate. Then, replant the vigorous growth found on the outer edge of the clump.

Why Seeding Cool-Season Grasses in the Spring is Difficult

People often wonder why we recommend seeding cool-season grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass in the fall. It would seem that the spring would be the more natural time for seeding because the entire growing season is available for the grass to become established before the turf has to deal with winter. Actually there are a number of reasons that tend to make fall seedings more successful.

1. ***The soils are warmer in the fall.*** Warm soils mean less time required for germination and growth so the grass becomes established more quickly. I have seen tall fescue seeded in the last week of August come up in four days. Now, you had to be on your hands and knees to see it but it was up. It is not uncommon for Tall fescue seeded in the spring to take as long as 15 days to come up and the time required to become established is much longer.

2. ***Weeds are less of a problem in the fall.*** The major weed problems in the fall tend to be the broadleaves such as chickweed, henbit or dandelion. Turf seeded in early September is usually thick enough by the time these broadleaves germinate that often there is not much weed invasion. Even if there is some invasion by broadleaves, the turf is usually mature enough by early November that mild broadleaf herbicides can be applied. In the spring, our major weed problems are the annual grasses such as crabgrass. Since the spring-seeded turf is slow to mature, there are often thin areas that are easily invaded by these grassy weeds. If this invasion occurs, the weeds

are better adapted to our summer conditions than our cool-season grasses and so the weeds tend to take over.

3. ***The number of chemicals that can be used on young turf is limited***, and so these grasses become more of a problem. One of the preemergence herbicides that can be used on young grasses is dithiopyr (Dimension). It is found in Hi-Yield Turf and Ornamental Weed & Grass Stopper and Bonide Crabgrass & Weed Preventer and can be used on tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, and perennial ryegrass ***two weeks*** after germination.

4. ***Summer is the hardest time of the year for cool-season grasses; not the winter***. Summertime is very difficult because our cool-season grasses do not have the heat or moisture stress tolerance that our warm-season grasses such as buffalo, zoysia and Bermuda have. Therefore they tend to become weakened in the summer which makes them more susceptible to disease and other stresses. Spring-seeded cool-season grasses are less mature and therefore less able to tolerate these stresses.

Seeding cool-season grasses in the spring can be successful but is more difficult to pull off than fall seedings. If you have a choice, always opt for seeding cool-season grasses in the fall.

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