



HOME & GARDEN

Home and Garden information center • 12005 Homewood Road • Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

July 2009

Lawn Tips

- Typically, July is a very hot month and proper mowing of your lawn is critical to help it survive the summer. “Mow ‘em high and let ‘em lie” should be your slogan. Cut your cool-season turf (fescues and bluegrass) to a height of 3-4 inches and leave the clippings on the lawn where they will decompose naturally. Mow warm season grasses, like zoysia and Bermuda, to a height of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- Grasscycling, leaving the clippings lie, does not lead to thatch build-up problems. Remember to keep your lawn mower blade sharp. Dull blades tear turfgrass and can lead to disease problems. Sharpen it a few times during the summer.
- Now is the time to fertilize Bermuda grass and zoysia grass. Apply according to the instructions on the bag. Do not fertilize cool-season grasses (fescues and bluegrass) until fall because fertilizer applications during the summer months may cause undue stress to the grass and encourage weed growth.
- Because of all the rain we are getting, crabgrass is growing very rapidly. But as long as it is still young, it can be controlled with a post-emergent herbicide, or hand dug from the lawn. Wild strawberry, violets, clover, dandelion, wild onion, plantain, and other broadleaf weeds can be controlled now with spot treatments of a liquid broadleaf herbicide. Herbicides can damage or kill non-target plants and animals if used incorrectly. Do not spray herbicides around ponds or on breezy days and read and closely follow all label instructions. Broadleaf herbicides should not be applied during hot weather. It is best to wait until temperatures cool down. Weeds are more susceptible to herbicides when they are growing vigorously.
- As temperatures rise and rainfall decreases turfgrasses usually become dormant. This is a normal plant response. We expect lawns to actually hold on longer this summer than in previous years because of the excessive rainfall and cooler temperatures. Only newly seeded or newly sodded areas may still need watering. Moss and algae growth is favored in lawns by the very wet conditions we’ve experienced. It’s usually associated with low sunlight, compacted soils and low soil pH. To return the area to turf, rake or dig out the moss, incorporate fertilizer and lime according to soil test recommendations and re-seed with tall fescue seed in the fall. If turf will not grow, consider re-planting the area with an appropriate groundcover.

Insects

- Cicada killer wasps are becoming active. They are 2 inches long and resemble yellow jackets in coloration. These wasps are not aggressive and will not sting unless handled. These harmless wasps prey on cicadas and dig nests in soil. They are solitary insects but may congregate in large numbers. They prefer sandy soils in full sun to dig their nests. No controls are recommended.
- Japanese beetle adults are active now, mating and laying eggs. The grubs that hatch live in the soil and feed on turfgrass roots. Bluegrass is the favored host plant. High numbers of Japanese beetle grubs will cause considerable damage to the lawn. The adult beetles can be very destructive to roses, flowers, grapes and vegetables. Japanese beetles are most numerous in new housing developments. For more information, read HG 78, The Japanese Beetle.

Disease

- Brown patch is a common fungal disease of fescue lawns that begins to appear as thin, brown areas. This disease is typically worse on over-fertilized lawns. No chemical controls are recommended; grasses will green up and recover in the fall.
- Summer patch and dollar spot may be seen now on bluegrass. No fungicide sprays are recommended.

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