

Mow tree leaves and other fall lawn care tips October 19, 2018

Fall is an important time when maintaining a cool-season lawn. Unfortunately, lawn management isn't at the top of mind in late-fall. Here are a few lawn care tips for mid- to late-October.

Mow those tree leaves

While many homeowners bag tree leaves each fall, most professional turf managers mulch mow leaves. Mulch mowing can be easier and returns complex organic matter and nutrients to the soil. Some research suggests that mulch mowing can even help control weeds. While this weed control benefit can be sporadic, it can help improve the health of your lawn and soil. Mulching leaves is also easier and less time consuming than bagging. Sometimes a double mowing at a slightly higher cutting height will help shred those leaves and bury them in the lawn. The ground tree leaves won't add to thatch.

The left side wasn't mowed and the right side was mowed twice with a self-propelled mulch mower. The shredded leaves improve the soil.



Sometimes the tree leaves come fast and quickly pile over the lawn. If you need to rake and bag, compost those leaves and don't put them on the street or other concrete surface. Nutrients can leach from the leaves and pollute waterways.

Fertilization

We are approaching the end of the fall fertilizer window. Nutrient uptake will decline as growth slows. Applications past November 1st are not efficient because of limited nutrient uptake. Use materials with as much water soluble nitrogen as possible. Specific winterizer-type fertilizer aren't necessary, but be sure to buy a fertilizer that has compatible settings with your fertilizer spreader.

Weed Control

Summer annual weeds like crabgrass and foxtail have been killed by the recent freeze. Pesky perennials like creeping Charlie, clover, and dandelions are best controlled during mid fall. The Turf iNfo "[Tips to control troublesome lawn weeds in fall](#)" has specific control recommendations for those challenging lawn weeds.

Fall Irrigation

Moisture has been more than adequate across much of Nebraska. Remember that above-ground irrigation components (such as a backflow preventer) should be turned off and drained before a hard frost or freeze. In-ground systems should be drained or blown out before winter.

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