

Mid-Fall Turf Tips**October 5, 2017**

October is an important time of the year for turf maintenance. It's time to recover from summer and prepare for winter stress.

Fertilization: The season is coming to a close. Cooler temperatures and reduced transpiration will reduce nitrogen uptake. Switch to mainly soluble fertilizers and avoid slow release products. Highly maintained turf that is spoon-feed should remain on a spoon-feeding program until growth ceases. Avoid large amounts of potassium fertilizer.

Irrigation: Mild drought stress in mid-fall can actually improve cold tolerance a bit. The trick is to allow slight water deficiency now but make sure the plants are not drought stressed entering winter.

Mowing: It is best to maintain the same mowing height during the fall as the summer. Scalping the turf removes valuable sugar energy and exposes the crowns to the environment. Longer turf is more apt to develop disease like snow mold during winter. Stay on a regular mowing schedule until growth stops. Putting green turf is the exception. Slightly increasing mowing height is a good general practice going into winter. Mulch mow tree leaves to return organic matter to the soil.

Seed vs Sod: The seeding window is rapidly closing or has closed depending on your location within Nebraska. It is still OK to sod, however. If sod is impractical, then consider a dormant seeding in November. Covering those seedlings will increase the likelihood of success.

Weed Control: This is the time to control those pesky perennial weeds like dandelion, white clover, and ground ivy (creeping Charlie). Combination herbicides can improve control and multiple applications may be required this fall to completely control those tough weeds. Don't worry about summer annual weeds like crabgrass and foxtail at this time. It's too early to treat warm-season turf like zoysia or Buffalograss with a non-selective herbicide.

Diseases: Rust can be prevalent on Kentucky bluegrass, but will be killed with the first frost. Fall dollar spot can still be a challenge to control. In both cases, fungicides can aid recovery if the damage is unacceptable. It is also a good time to treat for root diseases like take-all patch on new golf putting greens.

Topdressing: Winter desiccation is always a concern on golf turf in Nebraska and the Northern Great Plains. Start aggressive sand topdressing now to cover those crowns going into winter.

These are just general recommendations and may vary depending on your exact climate, species, and growing environment.

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