

## Late October lawn management advice

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.

### Fertilization

Despite older recommendations, we are approaching the end of the fall fertilizer window. Nutrient uptake by the plant will slow down as growth slows and water use declines. Fertilizers applied this time of year should be mostly quick-release or water soluble nitrogen (WSN on the label). This will allow for maximum plant uptake while the weather is still warm and dry. Applications much past November 1<sup>st</sup> are less efficient because plant uptake is low. This causes nutrients to leach away during winter or linger in the soil until spring; a bad thing because you'll need to mow a lot more next April. You don't need to use a specific winterizer-type fertilizer, but be sure to buy a fertilizer with spreader settings for your particular fertilizer spreader on the bag.

### Mowing

There are many different theories about how to mow a lawn going into winter. An easy, yet effective, way is to continue to mow at your normal mowing height (preferably between 2.5 and 4 inches) until the turf stops growing. Mulch mow tree leaves to add compost and nutrients to your lawn. It beats raking and bagging tree leaves.

### Weed Control

Summer annual weeds like crabgrass and foxtail will kick the bucket with recent or upcoming frosts. These weeds don't need to be treated with herbicides in fall. However, 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](#)" was published on September 17. It has specific control recommendations for those challenging lawn weeds.

### Fall Irrigation

October has been very dry for much of the state and the non-irrigated turf is starting to look pretty stressed. While some drought stress in October can help induce deeper winter dormancy, too much drought stress can actually make the turf more susceptible to winterkill. Apply enough irrigation to prevent visible drought stress but don't overdo it. Let your eyes be your guide. Also, 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.



Water 'geyser' from a frozen backflow preventer

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