

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES

NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Helping
Carolinians In
The Piedmont
Increase Their
Knowledge of
Gardening &
Manage Their
Landscape
Investment

Lawn Care Basics for Fall

With the joy of owning a home comes the joy and challenge of caring for a lawn. Whether you're facing the task of establishing a new lawn or considering improvements to an existing lawn, there are basic, research-proven guidelines that will help you make your lawn care efforts a success.

The fall season is the best time to aerate, fertilize and seed fescue lawns, which is the grass most commonly grown in the Piedmont. Adopting a few basic steps will help you establish a beautiful lawn you'll be proud to call your own, and one which provides many benefits. A well-established and well-maintained lawn helps prevent runoff and soil erosion, helps clean the air by converting carbon dioxide to oxygen and improves the value of your property. The page 2 article, *A Beautiful Lawn Next Spring Begins This Fall*, will help get you started with your fall lawn care.

If you're looking to hire someone to care for your lawn, check references of prospective companies or ask your neighbors for a recommendation. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the services that will be provided.

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Fruitless Sweetgum Boasts Pretty Fall Color

Many people are familiar with the sweetgum, better known as the "gumball" tree, a native tree with round, spiny fruits that litter your yard and make barefoot walks impossible. Fruitless sweetgum differs from the species in several ways. Its lustrous, dark green leaves are star-shaped with rounded instead of pointed leaf tips.

Growing fairly quickly, it will reach a height of 20 feet in 10 years and ultimately 60 feet at maturity.

Fruitless sweetgum has an attractive purplish fall color and no gumball fruits. This N.C. Association of Nurserymen Raulston Selection Plant has limited insect and disease problems, grows exceptionally well in difficult soils and is a long-lived, low-maintenance tree. *John MacNair*



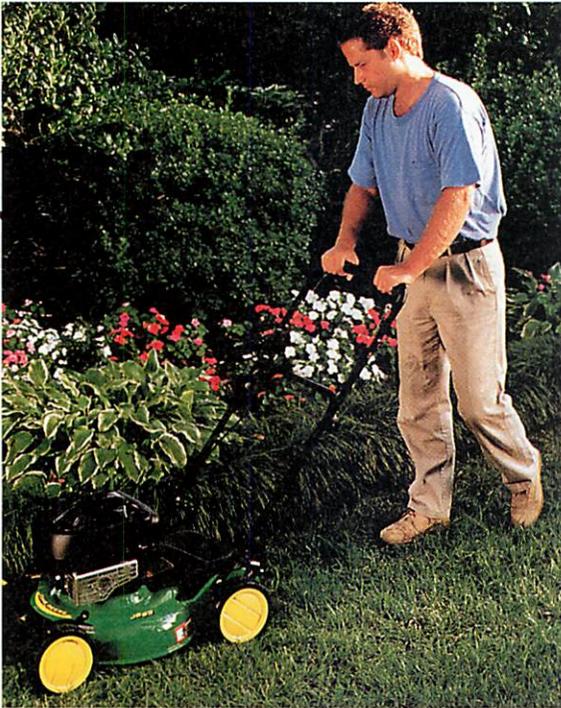


A Beautiful Lawn Next Spring Begins This Fall

If your idea of lawn care were a gauge of your personality, where would you rate? One extreme on the lawn care scale is a perfectly green carpet of turf on which no one is allowed to walk, versus the other extreme where fertilizing is considered

bad because it will make the lawn grow which leads to more mowing.

Most people probably fall somewhere between these two extremes. Fortunately, a beautiful lawn is attainable for those who are willing to spend reasonable, but not excessive, amounts of time and money on their yards. Here is a middle-of-the-road approach to lawn care. Keep in mind that a beautiful lawn next spring begins this fall. Use this lawn care guide to get started!



Renovating an Existing Lawn

- Early fall is the best time to renovate fescue lawns. A way to renovate a lawn is to overseed an existing stand of grass.
- Remove weeds prior to overseeding. If using a herbicide, follow instructions. Remember to use postemergence herbicides 4 to 6 weeks before overseeding. If you use a nonselective herbicide, such as Roundup, do so seven to 10 days prior to renovation.
- Mow grass at the lowest setting and collect the clippings. If needed, use a dethatcher at this time to collect thatch in the grass. Core aerate next to provide good seed to soil contact.
- Apply a starter fertilizer according to directions over the prepared lawn area.
- Apply the grass seed at the rate of about 3 pounds per 1,000 square feet of area.
- Keep renovated area moist with light sprinklings of water several times daily. As the seed germinates, reduce the frequency of watering.
- Mow the renovated lawn at a height of 2.5 to 3.5 inches. Do not bag clippings.
- In November, make your second fertilizer application. Also apply lime in November if soil test indicates need.
- Use proper lawn management to prevent having to renovate annually.

Establishing A New Lawn

- When planting a new lawn, put a lot of emphasis on soil preparation. Have the soil tested. Based on the results, apply the needed lime and fertilizer, and mix these materials into the top 6 to 8 inches of the soil.

▪ For seeding a fescue lawn, the rule of thumb is

to apply 6 pounds per 1000 square feet of lawn.

- Mulch the newly seeded lawn lightly with straw to reduce erosion and to keep the moisture around the seed.
- Keep the seed moist with frequent light waterings, two to three times a day.
- As the seed begins to germinate, water for longer periods less frequently.
- Begin mowing when the grass is about 4 inches high.

Caring for an Established Lawn

- If you have not had a soil test within the last two to three years, complete this now. Test results will indicate how much lime, nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium your lawn needs. You can use a complete fertilizer with a ratio of 4:1:2 or 4:1:3 (N-P-K) in lieu of a soil test but it is not a good substitute for a soil test. Fertilize the fescue lawn in September, November and March, using 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn.
- Continue to water the lawn in the fall, applying about 1 inch of water per week early in the morning.
- For weed problems, apply a broadleaf herbicide this fall. Be sure to follow label directions.
- Core aerate compacted lawns to move air and water down to the roots. This can be followed by seeding. If your lawn is well established do not overseed.
- Continue to mow fescue grass during the fall months at a height of 2.5 to 3.5 inches. *Kevin Starr*

Ask for "Carolina Lawns"

To learn more about lawn care, contact your local Cooperative Extension Center and request the publication, "Carolina Lawns." The publication is also available on N.C. State's TurfFiles web site at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/TurfFiles/pubs/index.html>.

Gardentalk

"To dig and delve in nice clean dirt can do a mortal little hurt."

— John Kendrick Bangs

Free soil test kits are available at your local Cooperative Extension Center.



What is cutting off the limbs on my pecan tree?

Pecans, along with hickories,

persimmons and a few other trees, lose small limbs when attacked by the pecan twig girdler. This beetle lays eggs in the limb and then saws around the limb. The limb dies and later falls to the ground. It looks like a pocket knife cut. College students cheating on their insect damage collection have used pocket knives to duplicate it. If you look carefully, you will notice puncture marks on the stem where the eggs are laid. Looking

even more carefully, you will see claw marks from the front legs right above the cut. That's how we knew the students were cheating. The pecan twig girdler develops inside the cut twig. Destroying the cut twigs will kill the insect before it becomes an adult. This reduces the number of insects but some will still fly in from natural areas. Since there are only a few pecan twig girdlers in the canopy, and they only do limited damage, pesticide sprays are not justified.

David Goforth

Tree Seedlings Available from Forest Service

Loblolly pine, blackgum, black walnut, roughleaf dogwood, chestnut oak and scarlet oak are just a few of the nearly 50 species of tree seedlings that are available from the N.C. Division of Forest Resources. Seedlings can be ordered through December, though orders are filled on a first come, first served basis.

The N.C. Division of Forest Resources sells seedlings at a nominal fee for forest planting, erosion control and windbreaks. Usually trees must be bought in groups of 20 or more, so it's a good opportunity to plan a project with your neighbors if you don't have space for that many trees. When planting, space pines 20 feet apart and

hardwoods 30 feet apart. Avoid purchasing white pine and Fraser fir for planting in the Piedmont as they are susceptible to root rot.

For more information, contact your county Forest Service ranger or call 1-888-NC-TREES. The N.C. Forest Service web site is <http://www.dfr.state.nc.us/>.

John MacNair

ENVIRO-TIP

The Benefits of Compost

A good way to improve soil is with compost. Think of it as a soil conditioner that adds higher organic matter and improves drainage. Making compost in your own backyard is easy and now is a good time to think about starting a compost pile since fall is just around the corner and you may have many leaves to add to the mix. Use yard, garden and kitchen fruit and vegetable waste to make compost but avoid meat, bones, dairy products, pet waste and plants or grass clippings that have been treated with chemicals.

Finished compost added to heavy clay soils helps break them up, allowing water to infiltrate faster therefore reducing erosion and runoff. In addition, compost increases the organic matter of the soil and provides nutrients that enhance plant growth. Use compost as a mulch around landscape plants or spread on turf area. Another benefit to composting is that it helps save landfill space.

To learn more about composting, contact your local Cooperative Extension Center and ask for the publication, "Composting: A Guide to Managing Organic Yard Waste," or access <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/bulletin.html>

Royce Hardin



Successful Gardener Series

Forsyth County

Friday, September 24

Saturday, September 25

Master Gardener Horticulture Information Booths and Plant Sale

- ▶ 12 to 5 p.m. – Friday
- ▶ 8 a.m. to 12 – Saturday
- ▶ Agriculture Building
- ▶ 1450 Fairchild Drive, Winston-Salem
- ▶ Call (336) 767-8213 for details.

Guilford County

Tuesday, September 7

Establishing a Lawn

- ▶ 7 p.m.
- ▶ Agriculture Center
- ▶ 3309 Burlington Road, Greensboro
- ▶ Call (336) 375-5876 for details.

Mecklenburg County

Saturday, September 11

Perennials for the Southeast

- ▶ Speaker: Ann Armstrong
- ▶ 10 a.m. to noon
- ▶ Winghaven Garden
- ▶ 248 Ridgewood Avenue, Charlotte
- ▶ \$10 fee
- ▶ Register by Sept. 9 at (704) 336-2561



Gardening in September

What to Plant

- Mid-September is a great time to set out landscape plants.
- When planting, break up or slightly pull apart the plants' root ball.
- Set out new chrysanthemum plants.
- Plant pansies to add color to your yard in the cooler months.
- Transplant any evergreen trees or shrubs that need moving this month.
- Plant the following fall vegetables in September: mustard, onion, radish and turnip.

What to Prune

- Do not prune shrubs in September, October or early November!

Pest Outlook

- Check these landscape shrubs for these pests: spider mites on arborvitae, hemlock and juniper; lace bugs on azalea and pyracantha; scale on euonymus.
 - Crape myrtle leaves may be blackened from sooty mold. This is caused indirectly from aphids feeding on the foliage.
 - Protect ornamental cherry trees, purple-leaf plums and cherry laurel plants with an insecticide that controls borers.
 - Spray for peach tree borer on plum, nectarine and peach tree trunks.
 - Keep a close eye on all fall vegetable plants. Insects and diseases are more severe in the autumn.

Lawn Care

- Do not fertilize warm season grasses like centipede, Bermuda and zoysia now.
- Apply an insecticide for lawn grubs in early September, if it wasn't done in August.

John Vining

The Bicentennial

Garden in Greensboro was initiated in the 1970s with the anticipation of our country's bicentennial. The garden landscape includes a new sensory garden, woodland stream and a new and improved sundial garden. This garden's many features make it a treat to visit any time of the year. The thousands of spring bulbs and azalea plantings quickly change over to summer annuals and perennials. The Chandler wedding garden and gazebo, also new, were created for ceremonies and provide a terrific setting for photo opportunities, meetings and pure relaxation. The garden is located at 1105 Hobbs Road, adjacent to the David Caldwell Log College Historical Site. This site, along with the old mill site, will be developed as benefactors are located. All of the restoration and development take place through a partnership with the City of Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department and Greensboro Beautiful, a nonprofit organization. The garden is open daily, sunrise to sunset, and is free to visitors. Call (336) 373-2911.

Karen Neill

Garden Spot



The *Successful Gardener* provides timely, research-based horticultural information to help Carolinians make wise landscape investment decisions and gain greater enjoyment from their lawns and gardens. The newsletter is part of an overall horticulture program which includes Extension's Successful Gardener Workshop Series in various counties throughout the Piedmont region. We publish monthly except January and July. Comments concerning *Successful Gardener* may be sent to:

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Ask for Extension's Successful Gardener at one of your local garden centers each month!

For a list of garden centers where you can find *Successful Gardener*, please call (704)336-2561 or look on our Home Page at <http://mecklenburg.ces.state.nc.us/>

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Tune in to "Making It Grow!" – a gardening show featuring Extension agents from the Carolinas. Saturdays, 1 p.m. WTVI 42, Charlotte

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