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Gardening by the Moon

April 2023 Newsletter



SPRING GARDENING

By Dr. Robert Moon

Spring is the time of the year when you need to start paying attention to your yard. If you do the following five things, you will set your landscape up for success throughout the year and avoid most weeds and sprinting away from fire ants.

- **Remove Freeze Damage** - Now is an excellent time to trim all the freeze damage off your plant materials. If plants are putting on new growth at the base of the plant, trim back to where the plant is pushing out. This will allow the plants to grow without dead or discolored branches or leaves.
- **Summer Weed Prevention** - Apply pre-emergent weed control to all turf and beds to avoid summer weeds. Treatment times for the year are March 15, May 15, and September 15. Even though it is early April, apply now. It is not too late. It will control weeds that

have not germinated. Apply Halts, Preen, or Pre-M. Selective pre-emergent herbicides are mild materials that effectively control weeds without endangering turf and landscape plants that already have existing roots. They kill only germinating weed seeds.



- **Post-Emergent Weed Control** – For those weeds that have already germinated, apply weed control for southern grasses. Make sure the product you purchase is safe for your lawn type.



To control nutgrass and grassy weeds, you can use Image. Always apply any product according to label instructions.



Note: Do not apply any product that has mixed pre-, post-emergent, and fertilizer. You can easily damage your yard if over-applied.

- **Spring Fertilization** - Fertilize your turf and shrub beds now with a 3-1-2 or 4-1-2 ratio fertilizer, such as 15-5-10 or 16-4-8. Use a spreader with an edge guard to keep fertilizer off hard surfaces. Fertilize as per the label on the bag—water fertilizer after applying.

- **Fire Ant Control** - Treat your whole landscape (turf and beds) with fire ant control such as Over'n Out in April for six months long fire ant control. Apply per label instructions.



Protect Ornamental Grasses From Root Disease!

Ornamental grasses such as miscanthus and gulf muhly that were not cut back low enough (4-6 inches) will be susceptible to Rhizoctonia disease as we go into spring. The higher cutback causes the crown of these plants to hold excessive moisture, and increased moisture favors disease pathogens. This disease attacks the plant tissue and can kill the crown of the ornamental grass. If the disease is attacking your grass, you will see a slow green up and a dead center in the crown of the grass.

Control with any fungicide that controls Rhizoctonia. The disease is sometimes called stem blight because it causes the stems in the crown to form lesions, and stems and roots rot. To identify the disease, pull on the stems, and if the disease is present, they will release with a gentle tug.



Watering of Turf to Prevent Disease

By Jennifer Hall

Many front yards are over-watered as the temperatures heat up. Last year, many had problems with overwatering, causing Pythium disease on their turf. Pythium causes irregular dead areas throughout your lawn once temperatures heat up. This means that June, July, August, and September will be the prime times for this disease to engulf your yard if you overwater. This disease can cause your entire lawn to die.



Now is the time to take preventative measures to avoid this disease. You can do nothing about the hot weather, but you can prevent overwatering the turf. Monitor your watering closely. Operate your irrigation “Manual” until the turf has dried out. The best case is to run your irrigation on “manual” at all times when home so you can control the amount of water applied, and only use automatic if you are going to be away from home for some time. But when setting it for automatic, set it so water is applied in the early morning hours. This gives the sun all day to dry out the grass before nightfall. Late-night watering favors the disease because the turf is wet. Set your irrigation to run but always consider rain when operating the irrigation system automatically.

If the disease is present in your lawn, even with control, the brown areas will not improve until the next growing season. The best control is water management, so start now before hot temperatures arrive and monitor your watering closely.

Spring Plant Spotlight: *Cinnamon Girl*



Highlights:

- Small evergreen leaves that have purple new growth that turns a blue-green as the leaves mature
- Compact plant that grows 2-3 feet in height and spreads 3-4 feet wide
- Excellent alternative for boxwoods and Indian Hawthorne
- Multiple uses for planting
- Fast growing, drought tolerant, heat tolerant, and resistant to most insects & diseases
- Likes full sun and provides foliage throughout the year
- Cold-hardy and does not mind humidity



Set irrigation to run one time every 7-10 days. If it is rainy, turn irrigation OFF.

Spring Watering

Tree roots are very effective in stealing water and fertilizer from the turf. Feed trees and turf at least 3 to 4 times per year. Add extra fertilizer and water under your trees to help prevent bare spots in the turf.

Tree Fertilization

Watch for Aphid activity! Treat aphids and other insects with Neem Oil application.

Insect Treatment

Daffodils will Return with Proper Care



You may have naturalized daffodils in your yard, so you need to know the proper care of these bulbs to rebloom next spring. The biggest mistake that you can make is cutting the daffodils back to the ground after the completion of bloom and while the foliage is still green.

Follow these tips to encourage blooms for next spring:

- Remove spent flowers so they do not form seed heads.
- Let foliage die back after flowering.

Allowing the foliage to die back means the bulbs store sugars from photosynthesis. This process keeps the bulbs healthy for next year's blooms. Once foliage dries up, the bulbs are dormant and just waiting for the following spring to show off their beauty again.

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