



MAY / JUNE 2012

It happens every spring! /

Prepare your lawn in the fall so that it's prepared for spring!

In the fall, the boat is put in dry dock, golf clubs are put away, kids are back to school and our gardens go by the wayside. Forgotten too is the lawn! The important things of fall seem to be school activities, soccer and NFL. So, if you're not happy with the appearance of your lawn in the spring, it's because you weren't thinking spring in the fall. Those last few mowings are done, the leaves eventually get cleaned up and your lawn is put out of mind; handle it in the spring. Wrong! Unlike the farmer, we sow our seeds in the fall and reap the benefits in the spring.

The first six weeks of spring our phone rings with concerns "*my lawn doesn't look good*". Well, most lawns usually don't look their best the first four weeks of spring and secondly, your lawn won't look any better in the spring than it did in the fall. Even though our business operates on a calendar year, we always say that our lawn program starts in the fall. Fall is the best time to fertilize. Fall is the best time for weed control. Fall is the best time for seeding and renovation. Here's why:

Seed won't germinate until soil temperatures reach 50°-55° F. In the spring that usually doesn't occur until around April 15th. In the fall, there's no waiting, the soil temperatures are well above the germination point, therefore, the seed when properly watered will start popping 10-12 days after being planted. Yes, I said planted. The seed must have good soil contact and with fescue seed (what we recommend) you can even give it a "light" covering of soil and then press it in.

Okay, the seed's in the ground and it grows roots deep into the soil, 6-8" (because you aerated and fertilized). It goes into winter dormancy and stops growing, **but**, the roots will continue to grow throughout most of the winter months. As soil temps rise in the spring root production increases and is stimulated by nitrogen applications. Now, the grass plants whose roots grew in the fall when planted, continued at a lesser pace during the winter, then grew even more and deeper in the spring. When the hot dry months of June, July and August come around your grass plants are better prepared to withstand and survive adverse conditions. Simply put, when you seed in the spring the survivability of those plants is reduced 66%.



Dense, uniform lawn of
Turf Type Tall Fescue



Mixed stand of grasses with holes
that will not self fill but will invite
weeds and crabgrass!

Now that we've established that seeds gotta go down in the fall, **lets talk fertilizer**. You guessed it, fall. Whether it's seedlings or established turf to be addressed, root growth is most active in the fall, so, why not coordinate fertilizer applications to coincide with plant growth. Old U of MD recommendations were three applications of 1 lb of nitrogen at thirty day intervals beginning in September (mainly because the basic effect of conventional fertilizers last only 4-6 weeks). *Scientific Plant Service, Inc.*, uses a high efficiency, controlled release fertilizer, POLYON, that permits us to combine those three fertilizer applications into one. In fact, we have the capability to formulate the fertilizer components to provide the exact amount of nitrogen your turf needs in the fall on a week to week basis, PLUS have left over nitrogen for over-wintering and be available to the grass plants in early spring. Now the only thing left is to supplement your turf in the spring with just enough nitrogen to ease it through spring to avoid a surge of growth and improve it's color. So,

coordinate nitrogen applications when it's best utilized!

Weeds; all lawns have them and they can be killed anytime of the year they are active! Our goal is to achieve the best possible weed control by putting the least amount of herbicide on your lawn at the most opportune time. In September you start seeing broadleaf weeds that germinated throughout the summer months when turf is stressed and semi-dormant. September is also when winter annuals start germinating. A good example of a winter annual is "chickweed" which is very visible in the spring. It gets its start in September. If we kill all of these guys in the fall they won't be a problem waiting to happen in the spring. For the most part, a good broadleaf weed application in the fall will deliver a weed free lawn in the spring, as long as all of those bare spots are filled in!

All lawns require extra attention every year whether it's bare spot repair, total renovation or core aeration. So, start thinking spring this summer and beef up your lawn this fall so you can enjoy a great lawn next spring.



Have you noticed? Our updated logo colors don't show on the red trucks too good, so, we're throwing out the old red and changing our fleet over to white so that our full color logo can be appreciated!

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR:

JAPANESE BEETLES haven't been a concern recently, however, don't count them out this summer! We have observed a fair amount of grub activity in the soil this spring, plus, constant rainfall last year and this season so far sets the stage for grub/beetle activity.

BROADLEAF WEEDS have a habit of popping up all season long. When you subscribe to basic lawn program (T1, T2, T4) we'll come back all year long and spray them for free. Just give us a call. BTW: if weeds are a constant problem, you most likely need to do some major seeding.

LEAF DROP caused by leaf diseases like Anthracnose and Apple Scab have been visible since early spring. The damp weather and inconsistent temperatures provide ideal conditions for leaf diseases. Timing of foliar sprays in the spring is often difficult. Now we can "trunk inject" fungicides this year to control these diseases next year.

SCALE INSECTS have been observed throughout most landscapes. Even plants that don't typically get scale infestations have them. We're doing our best

to locate these problems while making our ornamental applications and use the most effective products available to control them. Why the sudden out breaks? We don't know, perhaps the strange and extreme weather conditions of the past few seasons!

DEER continue their browsing throughout the summer months (actually all year) on valuable landscape planting. Our monthly applications are proving to be effective. Monitor the deer activity in your yard during the month to determine if we need to do free touch-up sprays.

DEER TICKS & BROWN DOG TICKS are predicted to be bad this year. 2-3 perimeter sprays per year will keep your yard safe. Do it now!

CRABGRASS is already well on its way to being a nuisance this year. Plants in the 3-4 leaf stage have been found in late-May. Monthly post-emergence will keep the "crab" in check. Free post-emergence sprays come with your SPS Lawn Program!

WATER YOUR LAWN during drought periods twice a week only. Water long and deep, $\frac{1}{2}$ " each time, to avoid disease and shallow root systems!