

TURF TIPS

The Turf Care Newsletter of Prestige Shrub and Tree, Ltd.®
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This is your sixth scheduled turf care visit for the year. Fescue lawns will be receiving a slow release fertilizer to carry it through the winter and into the spring.

****PLEASE NOTE THAT NO PRE OR POST EMERGENT HERBICIDES WILL BE USED ON THE FESCUE** until our first application of the new year. Applying any weed controls during the fall can have an adverse effect on germinating seed and young seedlings. As a result, fescue lawns can develop quite a few weeds though winter freezes will help to eliminate most weeds that do grow in over the fall.

Warm season lawns will be receiving lime in accordance to your measured soil pH along with weed controls. The soil pH is important as it controls which nutrients are available in in what amounts. Turf generally likes soils slightly acidic and by applying measured amounts of lime, we can maintain a healthy pH.

Now onto the weather! As we roll through August, we have had quite the respite from the typical summer time temperatures. We have been seeing temperatures in the low to mid 80s and we finished August with a measured 4.58" of rain. September, though it looks to be continuing the temperature trend, it has started off fairly dry. This means averaging 1" of water per week. Applying this all at once will allow the water time to soak deeper into the soil. Light frequent

irrigation (15-30min) 3 times a week mostly evaporates and does not soak deep enough into the soil. If you are on this type of program, you will likely still get hot spots.

When we do get rain showers, it is important to remember that the soil immediately starts drying out. Since we do not have a water table here in Atlanta it only takes a week or so with summer temperatures to dry our soils even with the heavy downpours. Rain-fall does not accumulate in the soil. Even if we don't go back to the hot temperatures consistently in the 90's, the soils can still dry out you may see hot spots form in your turf. Just because it feels nice outside with low humidity doesn't mean your turf doesn't need the weekly watering. Often times we see hot spots form with low humidity as the moisture gets removed from the soil. These areas are not getting enough water even though you may be watering each week. You may need to run that zone longer or you may need to physically determine that the head actually comes on and is irrigating properly by turning on that zone and standing on the hot spot; if you are not getting wet, neither is the turf! So stay alert and ready to provide irrigation as it is needed to avoid hotspots in the turf and more importantly, be proactive and do not allow the turf to slip into drought stress before irrigating it. Turf already in

drought stress is much harder to bring back online and may lose turf in excessively dry soils.

Raise Your Warm Season Turf Mowing Height!

For all of you with bermuda and zoysia, you should have begun to raise your mowing height by August 15 until you effect a height of 2.5-3" by October. By allowing the turf to grow longer, the turf root systems to grow longer and begin preparation for the winter. Healthier and longer root systems provide energy for next year's spring green up by providing more capacity for the turf to store needed nutrients for winter and provide protection from winter kill and spring time diseases.

It is critical for those of you with reel mowed bermuda or zoysia to raise your mowing height. Reel mowed home lawns are under a lot of stress due to the shallow root systems that are the result of high compaction levels (all that sand topdressing and the weight of the reel mower being used twice per week).

Turf that is not allowed to recover and increase its root system depth is more susceptible to winter kill, winter patch disease, fairy ring, spring dead spot and dollar spot. Everyone needs to understand we can not fix the disease problem with fungicide applications because that approach is rapidly becoming less effective

each and every year. Fungicides, even for those willing to pay the extra cost, are not designed to fix a cultural problem and will never effectively control the problem.

Fescue Tips

Your fescue (cool season) turf will soon begin to recover from the summer heat.

Do not mow the new fescue seedlings until they are 3-4" tall. Then maintain at a height of AT LEAST 3". If the turf is not growing, then DON'T mow. Don't mow just to pick up autumn leaves; gently blow instead! Many maintenance companies feel the need to mow each week. Needless mowing after seeding unnecessarily harms the young seedlings.

We expect to end our aeration and seeding by the middle of October. The cooler weather encountered as we move deeper into October, slows the germination and increases the likelihood the seed will simply rot. We suggest that you target your own seeding operation for the same optimal period.

Turf Pests

Army worms have NOT been an issue this summer. Fortunately we have not had the weather patterns that drive the moths north from Florida.

In past years, Armyworm activity was rampant in some areas of town, feeding mainly on the fescue. These worms are the larvae of the white-neck moth or army worm moth. Armyworms may be active anytime from August through October so be aware your turf could become infested any time in late summer through early fall. Knowing how to spot them can prevent a lot of damage.

Armyworms feed by chewing off the turf blades in fescue and bermuda lawns (they seem to alto-

gether avoid zoysia). The turf will look like it has been cut down with a weed eater with a lot of dead grass leaves chewed off. Fortunately, since the worms only chew off leaves and leave the crown, the turf usually grows back if it was being kept healthy and hydrated before the attack.

Another pest we usually see in the summer time are spittle bugs. Fortunately we have not encountered much spittle bug activity. Two line spittle bugs are mainly a Zoysia pest for us in Metro Atlanta and are roughly the size of your pinky nail, black in color, and have two red parallel lines bisecting their back. They will feed on the base of the turf sucking the plants' juices out of the leaves. This causes the turf to look brown and dehydrated. While spittle bugs can attack most warm season turf, they only do damage to zoysia turf (excluding Zeon and Emerald turf types). Look for these pests when the weather has been hot and dry. Simply walking through the lawn will uncover the existence of these pests as they jump when disturbed.

Lastly, grubs will feed on the roots of the plants resulting in turf that can be pulled up easily like carpet. Having **moles in your yard is NOT an indicator you have a grub problem.** If you suddenly see large brown areas in the turf, first check for dryness. Dig around the edge of the damaged areas and if you have grubs in the area, they will be focused around the edges eating the roots of the still healthy turf. You should be able to see them in the soil just under the turf.

While our applicators do scout for the presence of these pests in your turf, it is crucial to monitor

your own lawn as we are only on your property 7 times per season. If you think you may have any of these pests, scouting around and confirming their presence is key. Army worms can be found by pouring soapy water on affected areas as this will irritate them and cause them to surface. Many times, severe hotspots are mistaken for pest damage. If you do find you have any of these pests and wish for Prestige to treat your property, call our office for a quote on the cost of a treatment. Prestige also offers a preventative treatment done in the spring to prevent all three of these pests and can be quoted as an additional service.

Lastly, we want to draw your attention to a couple things that would help us do our job more effectively and help you get the most of your investment with Prestige. First, for those who live in gated communities or have gates on property, please take a minute to check to be sure we are on your permanent guest list or make sure we have the correct gate code to access your property. Most of the time this is not an issue though we have been running into problems accessing accounts because our name has been removed from the security list even on properties we have been servicing for years. If we do not have an access code to your property, please consider putting it on file with us as many times we find clients are unable to open their gates when we arrive causing us to reschedule the application. We operate on a tight schedule and already have to consider everyone's maintenance days so rescheduling an application due to a locked gate may not always be possible.