

## Horticulture 2014 Newsletter No. 9 March 4, 2014

Video of the Week: [Growing Asparagus](#)

### TURFGRASS

#### Lawn Calendar for Buffalograss



#### General Comments

Buffalograss has become more popular in recent years due to its reputation as a low-maintenance grass. Buffalograss does require less water and fertilizer than our other turfgrasses but often has problems competing with weeds in eastern Kansas. Buffalograss is an open growing grass that will not shade the soil as well as most of our other turfgrasses. Weeds are often the result. A regular mowing schedule can reduce broadleaf weed problems as most broadleaves cannot survive

consistent mowing. Those that do either have a rosette growing pattern (dandelions, shepherds purse) or are “creepers” (henbit, chickweed, spurge). Annual grasses such as crabgrass or foxtail can also be a problem. A good weed preventer (proflam, pendimethalin or dithiopyr) may be needed prevent problems.

#### March

Spot treat broadleaf weeds if necessary. The most important treatment for broadleaf weeds should be in late October to early November well after the buffalograss is dormant. Treatments are much more effective than in the spring as the weeds are smaller and the weeds are sending energy, as well as the herbicide, to the roots. Treatments in March are to take care of any “escapes” missed in the fall spraying. Spray early enough in March that the buffalograss is still dormant. Look at the base of the plants to make sure there is no green. Treat on a day that is 50 degrees F or warmer. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours of application will reduce effectiveness. Use a combination product such as Trimec, Weed-B-Gon or Weed-Out. Weed Free Zone is also good and will give quicker results under cool conditions.

#### April

Apply crabgrass preventer between April 1 and April 15, or apply preventer when the eastern redbud is in full bloom. If using a product with proflam (Barricade), apply two weeks earlier.

Crabgrass preventers must be watered in before they will work. Avoid using broadleaf herbicides as the buffalograss is greening up as injury can result. The buffalograss will not be killed but growth will slow making the buffalograss less competitive with weeds.

### **June**

Fertilize with 1 lb. of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet during June. More applications will give a deeper green color, but will encourage weeds. If it is felt that a second application is needed, apply in July.

### **June**

If grubs have been a problem in the past, apply a product containing imidacloprid by mid July. Imidacloprid can be applied as early as mid May if there are problems with billbugs or May beetle grubs. These products kill the grubs before they cause damage. They are effective and safe but must be watered in before they become active. Again, I would only treat if grubs have been a problem in the past. Note that the whole area may not need to be treated. The beetles that lay the eggs for the grubs are attracted to lights and moist soil and those areas are most likely to be infested.

### **Late-July through August**

If you see grub damage, apply a grub killer. If imidacloprid has been applied or if grubs have not been a problem in the past, this should not be necessary. Grub killers must be watered in immediately.

### **Late October to Early November**

Spray for broadleaf weeds if they are a problem. Look carefully as our winter annuals such as chickweed and henbit are small and easily overlooked. Use a product that contains 2,4-D as it increases effectiveness on dandelions. Treat on a day that is at least 50 degrees F. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours reduces effectiveness.

Use the rates listed on the label for all products mentioned. (Ward Upham)

## **VEGETABLES**

### **Bolting and Buttoning in Cole Crop Plants**



Broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower are cole crops that have a tendency to bolt (go to seed) or button (produce an extremely small head) if plants are not grown properly. These crops need to be kept actively growing through their production cycle, including growing transplants from seed. If they slow down due to under-fertilization or are stunted due to overgrowing their container, buttoning or bolting is more likely. If you are not growing your own transplants but rather selecting plants from a retailer, choose small, stocky dark green plants.

Even after transplanting, these plants need to be well-fertilized. Fertilize at transplanting with a

starter solution and continue to fertilize every 2 to 3 weeks until harvest. Both buttoning and bolting are irreversible. Once a seed stalk starts to form, nothing can be done to force the plant to produce a normal crop. (Ward Upham)

## ORNAMENTALS

### Pruning Deciduous Shrubs



Gardeners are eager to get out and do something in the landscape this time of year. One chore that can be taken care of during March is pruning certain shrubs. Often, gardeners approach pruning with trepidation, but it is not as difficult as it may seem. Remember, not all shrubs need to be pruned (i.e., witch hazel), and certain shrubs, which will be identified later in this article, should not be pruned this time of year. Shrubs are pruned to maintain or reduce size, rejuvenate growth, or to remove diseased, dead or damaged branches. Deciduous shrubs are those that lose leaves each winter. Evergreen shrubs maintain foliage all year and include yews and junipers.

Deciduous shrubs are placed into three groups:

- Those that flower in the spring on wood produced last year;
- Those that flower later in the year on current seasons' growth; and
- Those that may produce flowers, but those flowers are of little ornamental value.

Shrubs that flower in the spring should not be pruned until immediately after flowering.

Though pruning earlier will not harm the health of the plant, the flowering display will be reduced. Examples of these types of plants include forsythia, lilac, and mock orange. Shrubs that bloom on current seasons' growth or that do not produce ornamental flowers are best pruned in March. Examples include Rose-of-Sharon, pyracantha, Bumald spirea, and Japanese spirea.

Pruning during the spring allows wounds to heal quickly without threat from insects or disease. There is no need to treat pruning cuts with paints or sealers. In fact, some of these products may slow healing.

There are three basic methods used in pruning shrubs: thinning, heading back, and rejuvenating. Thinning is used to thin out branches from a shrub that is too dense. It is accomplished by removing most of the inward growing twigs by either cutting them back to a larger branch or cutting them back to just above an outward-facing bud. On multi-stemmed shrubs, the oldest canes may be completely removed.

Heading back is done by removing the end of a branch by cutting it back to a bud and is used for either reducing height or keeping a shrub compact. Branches are not cut back to a uniform height because this results in a "witches-broom" effect.

Rejuvenation is the most severe type of pruning and may be used on multi-stem shrubs that have become too large, with too many old branches to justify saving the younger canes. All stems are cut back to 3- to 5-inch stubs. This is not recommended for all shrubs but does work well for spirea, forsythia, pyracantha, ninebark, Russian almond, little leaf mock orange, shrub roses and flowering quince. (Ward Upham)

### **Cut Back Ornamental Grasses**



March is a good time to remove dead foliage from ornamental grasses. Grasses green up earlier if foliage is removed and are more attractive without a mixture of dead and live leaves. A number of tools can be used including hand clippers, weed whips (if the foliage is of a small enough diameter), weed whips with a circular blade, or even a chain saw. Use the top of the chainsaw bar to cut so the saw doesn't pull in debris and clog. Also, it is often helpful to tie foliage together before cutting so it doesn't interfere and is easier to

dispose of. Burning is another option — but only if it is safe and legal to do so. Note that these grasses may not burn long, but they burn extremely hot. Even so, the crown of the plant is not damaged and new growth appears relatively quickly.

If the center of the clump shows little growth, the plant would benefit from division. Dig up the entire clump and separate. Then replant the vigorous growth found on the outer edge of the clump. (Ward Upham)

## **FLOWERS**

### **Fertilizing Perennial Flowers**



Most flowering perennials are not heavy feeders, and once established, may not need fertilizing every year. However, a soil test or visual symptoms will help determine plant needs. Weak plants with light green to yellowish foliage will probably benefit from a nitrogen-containing fertilizer. In the absence of a soil test, apply a 10-10-10 or similar fertilizer at the rate of 1 pound per 100 square feet.

Fertilizer should be applied as growth begins in the

spring. Perennials that tend to need more fertilizer than the average perennials include astilbe, chrysanthemum, delphinium, lupines, and summer phlox. A second application during summer may be helpful for these plants. (Ward Upham)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Compost Turning



The cold, wet winter may have caused compost to cool and develop frozen areas. Turning the compost pile when the weather warms may be in order so that all materials are well mixed. This will prepare the compost for use this spring. (Ward Upham)

### Gardening with Kids

Is it hard to think about gardening in the winter? Certainly we have less maintenance to do, but that gives us more time for thinking, planning and scheming for the coming year. I've been doing a good bit of that lately. Specifically, I want to engage my 3.5-year-old more while I'm gardening. Don't get me wrong, the kid loves to be outside and help me garden ("I want to dig!"), but let's just say he has the attention span of a gnat sometimes.

His short attention span isn't so much of a problem when we're at the community garden in the spring because I can see him wherever he goes, which is generally to "find my people." What can I say; he's a friendly guy. However, as soon as the corn starts to get high, he disappears among the plots and soon enough a kindly gardener brings my wandering child back and I feel like "that" inattentive mother. Fortunately, Pinterest has been helping a girl out these days with lots of inspiring ideas to keep him engaged (and near me). I'm planning to build a mini children's garden in my plot. Yes, this means less food will be grown, but our little 25' x 25' plot has been producing more than we can process and use anyway. I think I can give a little space to the apprentice gardener.

What are my ideas? I'm planning to build him a teepee out of bamboo stakes. I haven't decided yet which vining plant to grow on the stakes, but I don't feel limited to food crops. There will certainly be more flowering plants this year—the garden needs some bright color! I may also give him his own section to grow some plants of his choice (if he's interested). I could paint some tree stump disks or paverstones in bright colors to make paths for hopping along. Or help him collect some rocks to play tic-tac-toe. So many ideas...

But the thing I'm really counting on to engage the apprentice gardener is a miniature garden. Of sorts. In the garden center world, miniature gardening has become a pretty hot trend. There are

several books for ideas (check out “Gardening in Miniature: Create Your Own Tiny Living World” by Janit Calvo, Timber Press), tons of miniature accessories (fencing, houses, bridges, trellises...you name it, they’ve got it in mini), and plenty of support to help folks like us be successful gardeners. I’ve heard stories about how miniature gardening has brought extended families together by connecting kids with aunts/uncles and grandparents. It’s an easy (and small) thing to connect over. I don’t plan to get too elaborate. In fact, I saw a cute idea on Pinterest to paint an old tire a bright color, fill it with soil/sand, and stock it with mini figurines (craft stores in the model section) like dinosaurs. What a great opportunity for him to grow his imagination and tell me stories while I work on the garden!

Of course, I’ve got ideas to keep him busy in our home garden as well. They primarily involve teaching him to help me prune the roses (and carry away the debris), add mulch, pick out annuals for the flower beds, and as always plant and water some beautiful containers of annuals. I really enjoy taking him to the garden centers to pick out plants. I love watching him use his senses to enjoy the sights, sounds, smells, touches and tastes that gardening allows us to engage in. That satisfied smile of his just melts his mama’s heart.

Do you have a kid in your life? Make plans to share gardening with them this year. Let them play and get dirty and use their imaginations. I highly recommend visiting the brand new children’s garden at Botanica in Wichita. In fact, there are lots of great children’s gardens to visit—just give it a search online. I just found one named “The Beanstalk” which reminds me that the apprentice gardener has been telling stories about beanstalks a lot lately. Perhaps that’s what we’ll grow up the sides of the teepee! Well, maybe mixed in with a flowering plant, I gotta have some ornamentals in the mix. Happy garden planning, y’all. (Cheryl Boyer)

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