TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Courthouse, 3rd Floor
100 E. Tyler St.
Athens, TX 75751
Phone: (903)675-6130
Fax: (903)677-7222
http://henderson.agrilife.org/

April 17, 2015

AGRIVIEW

By: Rick Hirsch
County Extension Agent

The answer is yes! Yes it is time to fertilize your lawn if you have not done so already this spring. Mid April is a good time for the initial lawn feeding if you have common Bermuda or St. Augustine turf in your landscape.

A healthy, vigorous turf is a goal of most homeowners. Comprising the "essential element" of most landscapes, all good lawns start with three basic management practices - fertilization, watering and mowing. Remember, too, that a healthy lawn is less prone to insect, disease and weed problems.

Soil fertility is important in a maintaining healthy, growing grass. The best way to find out which analysis of fertilizer is ideal for your lawn, how much of the fertilizer your lawn needs and when that fertilizer should be applied is to soil test. A kit with complete instructions is available through your county Extension office. If a test is not available or convenient, the following plan will work for most lawns, but a soil test is the best way to go.

The rate of fertilizer application, the frequency of application, the ratio (N, P & K) of nutrients and the source of nitrogen all have a great deal to do with how fast the lawn grows. A fertilizer ratio of 3-1-2 (12-4-8, 15-5-10) or 4-1-2 (16-4-12) will work well for Henderson County. Apply the fertilizer at a rate of 4 - 6 lbs. per 1,000 square feet of lawn area.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status.
The Texas A&M University System, U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

We don't want to forget about the hard part, mowing. The rule of thumb for mowing home lawns is not to remove more than one third of the leaf surface at any one time. For example, when St. Augustine grows to a height of 3 inches mow it back to 2 inches. Following this plan will eliminate the need to bag clippings - thereby saving time and valuable landfill space.

Grass clippings left on your lawn will not contribute to thatch, but return valuable nutrients to the soil. They usually contain about 4% nitrogen, .5% phosphorous and 2% potash, as well as all of the necessary minor elements plants needed.

Establishing a new lawn takes time, money and patience. One should recognize that there are essential steps to make certain you do it right the first time to have a quality lawn. Selecting the correct lawn grass for your site is THE first step. Lawn grasses do differ and each has its own strengths and weaknesses (i.e. tolerances to shade, pests, traffic, cold, drought, etc.). As for timing, spring is a great season to install warm season grasses due to the relatively mild temperatures and you have the entire growing season to grow the lawn in.

Pay close attention to your soil and the manner in which you prepare it for planting. Helpful hints include: remove the debris or old sod layers, control the weeds, take a soil sample for analysis, modify your soil with amendments (if needed), apply the correct fertilizer at the proper rate, cultivate/till your soil (smooth) and firm up the seedbed. Remember that seedbed preparation is essentially the same whether seeding or sodding. Don't be tempted to take short cuts! Try to establish the lawn the correct way the first time! A good recommendation is to have at least 6 inches of soil for your lawn. After you

have installed/planted your lawn grass, roll the area and immediately begin to irrigate. You will need light, frequent irrigations in the beginning so as to keep the area moist (not saturated). Then, as the grass roots penetrate into the soil, you can gradually change to a deeper and more infrequent watering schedule to promote a deep and healthy root system.

Warning: It is not recommended to use pre-emergent or post-emergent herbicides during the grow-in stage, especially when seeding. With sod, pre-emergence and some post-emergent herbicides can be used, but expect some injury, or delay in establishment. It is best to achieve excellent weed control prior to planting with products like Roundup or Finale.

For more detailed information on lawn establishment, go to the Aggie-Turf website at http://aggieturf.tamu.edu and click on "Answers 4 You", then "Establishment."

IMPORTANT DATES:

April 25th - Henderson County Master Gardeners Plant Sale - 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Senior Citizens Center - 3356 State Hwy. 31 E - Athens - trees, shrubs, bulbs, perennials, annuals, natives, heirlooms, vegetables and herbs - rain or shine

Rick Hirsch is the Henderson County Extension Agent - Agriculture for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit our web page at http://henderson.agrilife.org/.