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Early Season Cools Season Grass Lawn Calendar

Cool season turfgrass species are the norm for most all of our home lawns and athletic fields in northeast Kansas. That means they like temperatures ranging from the 40's to the mid-to-upper 70's. With spring (maybe?) finally here, they'll be taking off before long, and that means there are some 'chores' we might need to be prepared to get done.

Broadleaf weed control is one of those things that can really sneak up on turfgrass managers and homeowners alike. While fall applications would likely have been more effective from a broad spectrum standpoint for controlling winter annuals and weeds like dandelions, spring can be a good time for spot treatment. When necessary, spot treat broadleaf weeds on a day that is 50 degrees or warmer. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours of application will reduce effectiveness. Always read and follow label directions for best results.

If crabgrass is your nemesis, you probably have until April to apply treatment (products may vary – always read and follow label directions…). Many of our preventers are applied when the native redbud trees are in full bloom sometime in April. Moisture hasn't been a problem this winter, but who knows what spring will bring, so remember that the preventer needs to be watered in with about a quarter inch of water before it will start to work. NOTE: a good, thick lawn is the best weed prevention and may be all that is needed.

It gets warm. Grass starts to green up. We start to think about applying fertilizer. As with broadleaf weed control, fall is actually a better time to apply fertilizer than is the spring. In fact, applications in November and September will likely do more for your turf (both from a vigor and weed control perspective) than spring applications. If you didn't get a fall application applied – or just want to add a little more – May is probably your best option.

If you have a lawn that typically receives enough rainfall (or irrigation) that it doesn't go dormant due to drought in the summer, you can apply a light rate of a slow-release fertilizer once May arrives. If us are using a fertilizer that includes a weed killer for broadleaf weeds, you need to pay attention to how it is applied. Rain or irrigation within 24 hours of application tends to reduce effectiveness of the weed killer, yet the fertilizer needs to be watered in. If using a product with both fertilizer *and* weed killer, wait 24 hours after application before watering in.

All of our offices have a full complement of lawn care publications available either in the office or online from our KSU Bookstore. For those publications, contact a District Office or e-mail me at dhallaue@ksu.edu .