



## **ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM/ LIMESTONE COUNTY OFFICE**

**The Garden Spot  
For week of October 12, 2009**

### **Fertilize Your Lawn and Garden this Fall**

We are quickly approaching North Alabama's first traditional frost date. There are a couple of important tasks to do NOW to insure the health of your lawn and prepare your garden for next year. And while we're thinking about our yards, it's also a good time to do a soil test and fertilize and lime your garden.

#### **Lawns**

Fall fertilization is done differently for cool season (i.e. fescue) versus warm season grasses (bermuda, zoysia, centipede, St. Augustine). Warm-season grasses should not have fertilizer applied after mid-September. Their next application of fertilizer should come in the early spring.

The story is different for fescue lawns. Because of favorable environmental conditions (cool temperatures, short days) nitrogen applied at this time aids the photosynthetic production of carbohydrates. These carbohydrates are stored for use the following growing season, providing an earlier spring green-up and an energy source for turf grasses.

The application of a complete fertilizer which is high in nitrogen and potassium will enhance fall lawn color of cool season grasses (prolongs color retention) and promote early green-up next spring.

The fall application of fertilizer for cool season grasses should take place in mid-to-late October. The amount needed is in terms of actual nitrogen to be applied is NO more than 2 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet.

One other chore in the lawn and entire landscape to prevent winter damage is watering thoroughly during the winter. Although the top of plants may go dormant during the winter, the root systems do not, and the grass needs moisture to continue growth. Also, it's a fact that a well-watered plant is less likely to suffer freeze damage than a drought stressed plant. So, if we have a dry winter, get out there this and add some moisture to your turf.

### **Gardens**

You may have some turnip greens, broccoli, or even some late peas or squash in your garden, but your garden is probably just about finished for 2009. It's not too early to start thinking about your 2010 garden. In fact, this is the BEST time to start on your fertility plans for your 2010 garden.

First of all, find out if your garden needs liming or the addition of nutrients through fertilizer. That all starts with a soil test. Take your soil test this fall, and go ahead and apply fertilizer or lime so it will have an opportunity to penetrate the soil. Soil test kits may be obtained through any office of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Complete instructions are included. After soil samples are collected, the soil is mailed to the Soil Testing Laboratory at Auburn University. Results and recommendations are usually available within 1-2 weeks.

Mid-October is also an excellent time to plant a winter cover crop in the garden. Cover crops include crimson clover, vetch, cereal rye and rape. This will provide essential organic matter and additional nutrients next spring.

While we may be enjoying the cooler and shorter days, it won't be long before we'll be ready to make the most of our gardens and yards. A little advance preparation NOW can make our spring easier and prettier.

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