Last week was about controlling nimblewill, a perennial grassy weed in lawns. Since lawns are really beginning to green up, here is some helpful advice for those do-it-yourselfers.

Before you start mowing your lawn, sharpen the blades if you haven’t already done so. A dull blade shreds the turfgrass foliage and results in a brownish, straggly appearance overall.

In addition, it’s still a little early to apply crabgrass pre-emergent herbicide. You want to make the application as close to the time of crabgrass germination as possible. This gives you longer control in August and towards the end of the season.

Soil temperatures in the Dayton area are around 56F during the day and drop to around 43F at night. Crabgrass germinates when soil temperatures at night are around 55-60 F for at least 10 consecutive days.

If you live further south than Dayton, temperatures might be slightly higher. When I checked the temperatures on Tuesday, Dayton was 56F at 0-10 centimeters and Hamilton had 57F soil temps at the same depth.

Crabgrass typically germinated in Ohio between April 21 and May 10.

The old adage that you should apply pre-emergent herbicide around the time that forsythia blooms is not all that reliable. Soil temperatures are very reliable.

Fertilizer is an excellent way to help control broadleaf and other weeds in your lawn. Fertilizing and keeping the lawn healthy prevents weeds from encroaching. A thin lawn is excellent for weed growth.

Fertilizer for lawns need to be applied over the course of the growing season. Nitrogen, the nutrient needed most by turfgrass plants, doesn’t stick around long. It is either used up or it leaches out of the soil.

Therefore, we spread the total amount of nitrogen application required for a healthy lawn over the season. This is why you usually see four step lawn care programs.

The first application is typically combined with the crabgrass pre-emergent IF you have had a problem with crabgrass in the past. You can prevent crabgrass from growing with a thick lawn.

If you don’t want to fertilize, that’s ok too; just realize that the turf will eventually thin out and weeds will encroach. Some people don’t mind this, while others do.

Resist the urge to roll the lawn, especially if the soil is wet. Rolling the lawn with a heavy weight does more damage than good. It compacts the soil, prevent good aeration and drainage.

If those mole runs and hills are annoying you, wait until after a few good rains and they will settle. If you must roll the lawn, do it when it’s dry.

Finally, if you have bare spots, loosen up or disturb the soil and sow grass seed. The only problem with a spring seeding is if it doesn’t rain in the spring. Hopefully you won’t have to water if we have normal spring rains.