

Time to fertilize your lawn

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I have a feeling that most would like to be putting their lawn mowers and other lawn equipment away for the season. Hold on for just one more fall task that really goes a long way to benefit your turfgrass.

Research has shown that a late fall fertilization provides huge benefits to your lawn. In fact, if you are only going to fertilize one time a year, this would be the one time to do it.

Most don't think about lawn care this time of the year but that last fall fertilization gives your lawn the necessary nutrients for next spring.

The normal recommendation for fertilizing turfgrass is four times a year. The first application is made in April and usually coincides with an application of pre-emergent herbicide if there are issues with crabgrass.

The second application is made in late May and is sometimes paired with a broadleaf weed control.

The third application is in early September and the fourth is in late November.

Late November seems like a crazy time to fertilize turfgrass but it's the best. Roots are still actively growing and taking in nutrients.

At this time, they are storing up the nutrients for spring. In the spring, turfgrass tends to green up earlier and takes off stronger.

Ohio State University turf specialists have noted that combining the two late season fertilizations is even better.

Many also wonder why you have to fertilize four times. Why not just once?

Nitrogen is the necessary nutrient for turf growth. Nitrogen is for foliage and the turf leaf blade is just that.

Nitrogen is the only nutrient that doesn't stick around in the soil for a long time. Phosphorus (root growth) and potassium (overall health) stick around until they are used by the plant.

Therefore, nitrogen becomes the limiting factor in growing a healthy lawn.

Lawns need around three pounds of nitrogen per growing season to remain healthy and thick. Since nitrogen doesn't stick around for long, and what is not used in a short period of time leaches (moves down through the soil).

If three pounds of nitrogen is applied in the spring, a little will be available to the plant and the rest leached out.

By splitting the three pounds into four different applications, you are giving a little bit of nitrogen to the plant over a longer period of time.

Fertilizing a lawn is an easy way to thicken it up as well as to help fight weeds. Weeds take over when the lawn thins out, therefore follow a good fertilization schedule in order to keep the grass healthy.

Again, if you are only going to fertilize your lawn twice, do the last two. If only once, do the last one.



Master Gardener volunteers walking the OSU Turf research plots inspecting quality.