



## Summer Lawn Care

It is summertime and the heat is here! When temperatures in the Mid-South climb to the upper 90's you really need to start paying attention to your landscape, particularly your lawn. Ideally our warm-season grasses should naturally look their best in mid and late summer. The most common turf grasses grown in this area are Bermuda and *Zoysia*. Both are warm-season grasses. They actively grow from mid-spring through early fall.

The main factors for growing a thick, nice-looking lawn in the summer are proper fertilizing, watering and mowing. Pest control becomes a problem if the lawn is experiencing some form of stress which could be related to heat. Growing a good healthy lawn is the first step in turf pest control.

If you follow these simple steps you can have a beautiful lawn this year.

### **Feed Correctly**

The lawn must be fed properly to achieve, or maintain, density. Fertilizing means it will grow more and will need to be mowed more often, but such is the nature of a good lawn. A soil sample test is the only way to tell what your lawn really needs. The results of soil testing reveal pH, major nutrient levels, interpretation of those levels and recommendations for effective fertilizing based on the soil type and species grown.

### **Water Correctly**

You have to water as required during the summer months. It is always best to water early in the morning so that your lawn can dry out during the remainder of the day. A lawn that is not allowed to dry during the day is ripe for disease! Irrigation frequency depends on seasonal rainfall and soil type. When the lawn first shows any signs of drought or off-color areas, water it immediately. Water your lawns deeply and infrequently, applying about 1 to ½ inches per application, depending on site variables. You want to be sure that the root zone is moistened to about 4 inches down.

### **Mow Correctly**

To produce healthy quality turf proper mowing is essential. The correct mowing height is probably the most important practice to prepare lawns for the summer heat. Mow at heights around three inches or slightly higher. Although it will lead to more frequent mowing, set the lawn mower as high as possible. Lawns maintained at higher lengths usually develop deeper roots and dry slower than closely mowed turf. Taking off too much of the leaf blade at one time will cause your turf to develop a shallow root system.

Summer in Memphis brings the sweltering sun and soaring temperatures. Working out in the yard under these conditions can cause hyperthermia, a heat illness which can be a matter of life and death. Be sure to drink water often, rest in the shade, and always be aware of any heat related symptoms that you may be experiencing.

Be safe out there! Happy gardening!



*Christopher Cooper*