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## Give Your Bermuda a Rest

By Bill Jernigan, ACLP

Overseeding our Bermuda lawns here in the desert southwest has become a standard landscape practice of ensuring year-long green grass. Because most people come to expect overseeding, many of the negative aspects of overseeding get overlooked.

Typically, overseeding starts in mid September when Bermuda grass is actively growing. At that time, a combination of lowered cutting height, lowered irrigation amount and in some cases chemicals are used to slow the growth of the Bermuda. The Bermuda is then "scalped" to remove most of the green grass and allow the ryegrass time to become established. The Bermuda is then forced to compete for water, nutrients and sun with the newly planted rye grass.

The results in the Bermuda grass being in a weaker health condition when entering winter dormancy in November. The following Spring, still lacking energy from dormancy and again competing with the rye grass, the Bermuda now has difficulty re-establishing itself. The Bermuda will continue to struggle until the rye has died when temperatures reach 100 degrees. This can be a large contributing factor to Bermuda turf decline.

This whole process means that the normal growing season for Bermuda of April through November (8 months +/- depending upon weather conditions) is now reduced to June through September, just 4 - 5 months. This is not nearly enough time to provide for a healthy and vigorous stand of Bermuda grass in the summer months.

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*This is an example of Bermuda Turf that is in a declined state. Turf is lacking Bermuda after Rye grass has died off and typically may contain a large amount of weed, especially Spurge. This problem doesn't normally occur quickly, but normally takes a few years to occur. Utilizing proper turf management practices (fertilization, soil amendments, aeration, proper mowing and allowing the Bermuda to rest every few years) along with proper irrigation practices will allow these areas to fully recover.*



*Rye grass which has been overseeded at a higher than acceptable rate can multiply the negative affects to the Bermuda grass which is extremely noticeable at transition time. This turf was seeded at a rate of 8 pounds of Rye seed per 1000 square feet which helps to reduce the amount of competition as the Bermuda starts to grow in the Spring.*

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## Weed Control, Pre-emergent

With the expectation of our summer storm season, now is one of the best times to apply pre-emergent herbicide. Pre-emergent herbicide should be applied to the landscaped areas where you wish to prevent and control the growth of weeds. Timing of the application is very important. It requires water to leach the herbicide into the soil where the weed seed is residing. Once the pre-emergent herbicide is absorbed into the soil, it will help deter the germination of most weeds. It is important not

to disturb the area where you have applied pre-emergent. The more activity in the area will only break the barrier that you are trying to create with the pre-emergent, and weeds would have a better chance of growing.

An important factor when choosing a pre-emergent herbicide is to determine what type of weeds you have had in the past and selecting a product that targets that type of weed. With proper planning and good timing you can have a successful pre-emergent application.

## Preventing Wind Throw

By Gary McCunn, Certified Arborist WE-7255A



First of all what is Wind-Throw? It's the tendency of certain types of trees to blow over in high winds. And we all know how bad the winds can blow here in Phoenix.

By following sound horticulture practices from initial design to installation and establishment, we can stop this from happening to our urban forests.

Let's start with design, first let's pick the right tree for the right location. So many times I see the wrong type of tree's in the wrong setting. Pines that need very little water planted in turf areas. A multi-trunk tree with a 15 to 20 foot canopy, planted in a 3 foot wide planter or 5 feet out from a building.

Water is a very important part of the establishment of not only young trees but also as they grow in size. So many times we put all of the drip heads right up by the base of the tree, which is very important as a young tree. As the tree grows the roots grow out to 3 times the size of the canopy of the tree. Without a deep water source the roots are going to come up to the surface looking for water. This is why it's a good idea as time goes on to have

your maintenance company close off the emitters at the base of the trees and add extra drip emitters out to the edge of the ever growing canopy. Without a deep root system to support the tree it won't be long till you're calling someone to remove a downed tree.

Trees should only be staked when absolutely necessary and then only briefly. Stakes should be removed as soon as possible. The goals of any pruning program should be to establish a balanced branch structure, encourage the development of trunk and branch taper, keep top growth proportional to root development and reduce wind resistance. Wind resistance is one of the main reasons everyone starts putting stakes on trees, this is the worse thing you can do to a tree it weakens the tree instead of helping support it. A better thing to do is more frequent light trimming of the canopy, removing only about 25 to 30 percent at any one trimming.

With proper care, from installation to maturity, trees will remain vigorous and attractive for many years to come. So please do your part now and you will save your Associations a lot of money and have a very aesthetically pleasing desert landscape.

## Give Your Bermuda a Rest, continued from page 1

It is recommended that the Bermuda grass be allowed to “rest” from overseeding every 3 years. This will allow adequate time to better develop a healthy root system and to fill in bare or thin spots where Bermuda has not survived overseeding in the past.

Some of the additional benefits of non-overseeded Bermuda lawns:

- Savings on the cost of seed and fertilizer for new rye grass.
- Savings of irrigation water and associated costs because dormant Bermuda grass requires substantially less water.
- A stronger stand of Bermuda grass means fewer weed problems and less money spent

on weed control chemicals.

- Less time spent not only on overseeding but also mowing during the winter months.



*Properly maintained Bermuda grass can be achieved by following proper practices and by giving it a rest every once in a while.*



## MONTHLY LANDSCAPE CHECKLIST

### Plant Renovation List (Common Type Plants)

- √ Mediterranean Fan Palm
- √ Bat-Faced Cuphea

– General Irrigation Setting (Actual times will vary depending on the precipitation rate of your system)

- √ Bermuda Grass Turf irrigated using typical pop-up sprinklers: 10 – 12 minutes three times per week.
- √ Drip irrigation for Plants: 15 – 25 minutes two times per week. These times are for ornamental type plants. Native or xeriscape plants will require less.

Drip irrigation for Trees: 30 – 40 minutes one

- √ time per week. These times are for ornamental type trees. Native or xeriscape trees will require less.

Please remember that these are general recommendations and depending on your system you may need to adjust watering times up or down. Also, if we do receive rain then irrigation can be suspended until the soil dries.

Turf Fertilization for the Bermuda grass should be completed once every six to eight weeks on average using fertilizer containing at least 16–20% Nitrogen. Apply following the label and make sure to water in for a few minutes after application. Now is also a great time to dethatch your turf to help remove built up thatch (dead grass material). This can be accomplished using a hard rake for small areas or a power rake which can be rented locally. After raking is complete, use your mower to collect all of the thatch material. This will invigorate your turf and promote new healthy growth.