FOUR PEAKS MONTHLY

September 2008

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Its Overseeding Time Again!

Overseeding of bermuda grass is necessary in order to maintain a green lawn throughout the year in the deserts of Arizona. Bermuda naturally goes dormant and turns brown in or around late November after our first frosts of the winter. Ryegrass is the grass of choice for overseeding Bermuda. Both Annual and Perennial rye grass are available. While both are acceptable, perennial rye will provide a more aesthetically pleasing lawn with a darker green color than that of annual rye.

In preparation for overseeding, Bermuda should not be heavily fertilized after August 15, since nitrogen will favor more growth and less food storage. Excess fertilization of Bermuda in late August can make the Bermuda more competitive than ryegrass and will result in poor winter growth of the ryegrass. Dethatching (removal of dead and dying grass) of the Bermuda should also be completed at least 2 months prior to overseeding.

In Phoenix, overseeding is typically done around the first of October when temperatures are more moderate. This allows for slower bermuda growth and quick germination of the rye seed.

Follow the steps below for successful overseeding of your bermuda lawns.

1. Approximately 3-4 days prior to overseeding, turn off the irrigation to the grass. This encourages premature dormancy of the bermuda which in turn helps rye growth.
2. Scalp (mow) the bermuda to about ¾ to 1 inch in height. This allows for rye seed to soil contact and plenty of sun light for the germinating seed. Remove the clippings.
3. Sow the rye grass seed using a rotary spreader at the rate of 8-12 pounds of seed per 1000 square feet. For best results, apply ½ of the seed in 2 different directions for uniform coverage. At the same time as seeding, fertilize with a high phosphorus fertilizer such as 6-20-20 to encourage root growth of the rye grass following the label on the bag.
4. Composted steer manure can be used as a top-dress to help with seed germination. While not necessary, it does help to keep the seed moist and to reduce loss of seed due to birds. Be sure to use only a light top dressing as too much can cause damage to new grass seedlings.
5. Set up automatic irrigation systems to irrigate 3-4 time daily for the first 2 weeks. It is necessary to keep the seed moist but not over water to the point that water puddles. Depending upon the type of sprinklers, typical run times should be about 4-5 minutes. Start time should be approximately 8:00 am, 11:00 am, 2:00 pm and 5:00 pm. Adjust as necessary to prevent drying and puddling of water.
6. Once the seed has germinated, reduce the irrigation run times gradually. As a rule of thumb, decrease one start time for each week after germination until the grass is irrigated once per day. Daytime temperatures will also determine irrigation needs.
7. Complete the first mowing when the grass reaches a height of 1 ½ inches. Maintain mowing heights from 1 ½ inches to 2 inches for best results
8. Begin nitrogen based fertilizer applications after the first mowing following labeled instructions on the bag. A good typical fertilizer to use would be 16-20-20. Subsequent nitrogen based fertilizers should be applied every 3-4 weeks until the end of November and will help to maintain a green color through winter.

Monthly Manager's Feature

By: Gustavo Davila Central Valley Account Manager

Pre-emergent Herbicid

Utilizing a pre-emergent herbicide is a common practice that is aimed at th prevention of new weed growth in landscaped area The process is carried out several times of year, according to seasonal weed growth cycles.

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 desert 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 determining 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.

New This Month

The late summer application of a nitrogen fertilizer to fruit and nut trees will help increase fruit sizing. This is more significant for fall ripening fruit trees (navels & tangerines) than the varieties that ripen in the spring (Grapefruit and Valencia orange).

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