

Mowing Wet Grass

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Spring time, especially when we are getting timely rains, can be a real challenge to keep up with the lawn. One question that is sure to generate a lot of argument amongst homeowners is whether you can mow the lawn when it is wet, as in shortly after a rain or in the morning with a heavy dew. As long as the ground is firm enough to not tear up it is okay to mow grass when it is wet. After a good soaking rain, like we actually saw in May, the ground can get real soft and then riding lawn mowers can really start to tear up the lawn. I'm going to point fingers at some of the lawn care folks AND homeowners with zero turn mowers. You really need to take it easy with these things as you can leave divits all over the place. And divits leave bare soil which has then disturbed the crabgrass prevention barrier and then you have issues. Just slow down and take it easy, especially when the soil is soft and wet. Mowing wet grass does not cause a significant health problem with the grasses. If there are diseases present, they are going to be spread more by the wind than by the mower. Wet grass will tend to clump up more and become a mechanical issue but not really a plant health issue as long as you aren't leaving a windrow or large clumps of grass clippings laying around the lawn. Now, if the only time you can mow for the past two weeks it has been raining, and the grass is over a foot high, what do you do? You just mow it as tall as your mower can go. If that's your normal mowing height then that's all you can do. But rake up or bag the clippings so you don't smother the lawn. If you can set your mower higher, do so, then mow a few days later at normal

height. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Fertilizing Warm Season Grasses

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We tend to spend a lot of time talking about fescue and bluegrass lawns and ignore bermuda, zoysia and buffalograss lawns like they were the red-headed step child. Summer is the time to do everything to these lawns. Buffalograss lawns do well with one light fertilization a year, usually in early June. By light fertilization I mean 1 pound per 1,000 sq feet. You can actually get by with no fertilizer on buffalo but a little will help it to spread and will give it a deeper color. Bermuda and Zoysia need more than Buffalo. Remember, that all of these grasses are warm season grasses and they do all of their growing in the summer, mainly mid May to Mid-September. Bermuda needs about 4 lbs of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year. General rule of thumb is to apply 1 pound per 1,000 square feet basically in mid May, mid June, mid July and mid August. We don't want to fertilizer Bermuda after mid August as we can result in late season overstimulation that will be very susceptible to winterkill. Just keep in mind that if it is raining all summer long, you will be mowing like crazy, all summer long! Zoysia is in between Buffalo and Bermuda for nitrogen. It only needs about 2 lbs per 1,000 sq feet per summer. Apply one pound in early June and another pound in mid July. Too much fertilizer is a bad thing on Zoysia, just like on Buffalo. Slow release products are always best and if it stays dry you will want to irrigate these fertilizer treatments in. If it is staying real hot and dry and you aren't irrigating your lawn, back off on any July or Aug. applications. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Tree Leaf Issues

This is Gardening with Chuck on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year that we often see a lot of issues with tree leaves. Leaves may develop strange growths or leaf spots or suddenly disappear or develop holes. Some leaves may just curl up and die and fall off the tree. All of these are things that may cause extreme anxiety with the homeowner. For the most part, things that happen to tree leaves early in the season don't amount to a hill of beans when it comes to the health of the tree. Anthracnose is a common early season leaf disease that can hammer sycamores but ash and elms also. Ash trees can also develop leaf rust (a different disease than what attacks wheat by the way). Ash rust can cause deformed leaves and odd pinkish or orange spots on the distorted leaves. Just about every tree out there is liable to develop brown leaf edges or brown spots from about a dozen different disease problems or simply 2 days of hot dry winds. All of these things are nothing to worry about. Now, if all the leaves turn brown and stay on the tree, that may be a problem and you need to call me. My favorite of all however, are the fall insects. There's a whole group of tiny insects that feed on tree leaves. Their feeding causes odd and distorted growths on the leaf surfaces. It may be a bump, like a wart, as on hackberry psyllid galls. Or the galls may be longer and oddly shaped and a bright pink color as we find in a common elm gall insect. Again, while these galls look odd and disconcerting, they don't do much damage AND, there really isn't much that you can do for them as the insect is safely inside the growth away from any sprays. This has been Gardening with Chuck on the Talk of JC, 1420

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