

## Still Too Early For Early Season Lawn Care

### AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

I'm not surprised, given some of the recent weather, that I've been getting questions about early season lawn care. Sunshine and temperatures in the 50's will get many lawn-aholics cranked up and looking for something to do. I call this the honeybee syndrome.

On warm winter days, honeybees will become active and spend time cleaning dead bees and other debris out of the hive. Once this is done, they will even start foraging for food. Later on in February and March there may be some early season flowers blooming and the honeybees will gather nectar and pollen. But in January and early February it is unlikely that anything is blooming. So honeybees will gather particles of dust, sawdust anything small enough to carry, that in anyway resembles pollen, back to the hive and store it. Later on in the spring they will carry this back out of the hive, but with the warm weather, they just have to be doing something.

Many gardeners are the same way and warm, sunny winter days cause these gardeners to get busy and they need to do something. My first word of advice to all these gardeners is to go back inside the house and stay there. Close all the blinds, do not look at the thermometer, and just find something to do inside the home. It is really too early to be doing much of anything outside, other than taking a nice walk!

In a few more weeks, as long as the ground isn't frozen, you could apply some fertilizer to your lawn but only if you didn't get this done last fall. If you didn't apply a weed and feed product, and you have small weeds to kill, you could also do this in late February or early March as long as the temperatures are above 50 degrees and will be for several hours. Those little weeds that sprouted last fall, will be carrying on photosynthesis on sunny days with temperatures above 50 and as such will be able to take up the herbicide so it can kill the weeds.

Crabgrass shouldn't be germinating for several months yet. Most years we'd expect it to start germinating in late April and early May. There are many different crabgrass preventers out there and they all have different recommendations on how many applications to apply each year. Some you can apply in March and they will last all season. Others shouldn't be applied until April and then you'll still have to make a second application. If you need to do some reseeding or overseeding this spring, you won't want to apply any crabgrass preventer this spring as it will also keep your grass seed from germinating!

Speaking of reseeding, there are a lot of lawns that are going to be needing reseeding or overseeding because of the impact of the drought. It is too early for this as well. Get ready to seed your lawn, but don't put any seed in the ground until it really is spring, essentially after March 20<sup>th</sup>. But then try to get it wrapped up by April 15<sup>th</sup>. You want to get a grass plant well established before it gets too hot in June or it may not survive. You also need to decide whether you are going to water your new seeding. If you don't want to spend the money on irrigation, you may just want to hold on until we have a better feeling of whether this drought is over or not if you don't want to water.

We have numerous bulletins at the Extension Office on lawns and they are all free. You can also have a soil sample from your lawn analyzed for a small fee. Bring a pint of soil from several locations in your yard and we'll send it over to K-State for analysis. The Geary County Extension Office is located at 119 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street in Junction City.