

## ***Spring Lawn Tips***

Virginia has to be one of the hardest places around to grow a nice lawn. First of all the division line for growing warm season vs cold season grasses runs right through Richmond. Most of us in the past have settled on cool season grasses such as fescues and ryegrasses. These grasses perform well in the Winter and early Spring months but struggle during our hot summers. More and more people in our area have started to switch over to warm season grasses such as Bermuda and Zoysia. These grasses in the past had to be plugged, but today both are available from seed to be planted in the month of May. The dormant Winter look is superseded by these grass's ability to be able to stand up to hot, dry weather with less water and care. If you feel like you might want to switch over to one of these warm season tough guys, contact your local garden center or extension office for advice.

If you are like most of us – because of our very mild and moist Winter – weeds have just started to explode. Yes, there are a couple products you can use now to get these under control. First of all, I want to say that no granular weed and feed will work this time of year, except the *Dimension* product which targets crabgrass. Otherwise, it will take a spray-like *Weed Free Zone* or *Speed Zone* to do the trick. These products will work in temperatures as low as 55 degrees. Try to select a nice sunny day with warm temperatures and no rain for 24 hours. This will help stop seed formation as well. These products are ester products that turn into gas when they hit the weed and are absorbed into the weed which is why they can work in lower temperatures. *Weed B Gone* for example, needs 75 degrees in order to be effective.

Crabgrass is our next enemy we need to get under control. Many people mistake crabgrass from Bermuda grass which is your running grass that spreads by rhizomes and turns brown and dormant during the Winter. Crabgrass is a very vigorous coarse bladed grass that germinates in late March and grows very vigorously in the Summer and smothers out our good grass. A crabgrass preventer is the way to go and should be applied now through early Spring. Remember, you cannot apply new grass seed the same time as a crabgrass preventer.

Fertilizing is the next item in question here. Generally, if you have fertilized heavy in the Fall, we do not recommend fertilizing in the early Spring. This year is a little different though. The moist and mild temperatures we've been having has used up much of the nutrients that the grass may have stored so a half rate of fertilizer might be just what the doctor ordered. Fertilizers have also changed for the better as well. Old quick release fertilizers – such as 10-10-10- are no longer as popular. *Greenview* now has one of the best product lines on the market, with their patented “green-smart” nitrogen that controls releases in 4 ways to give a full 12 weeks of greening as well as controlled mowing. They are also removing all of the phosphorus to make the product more Bay friendly.

In summary, weed control is important and should be applied twice a year, once in late October and again in mid-May. If you are putting down weed control any other time, it is because you missed an application or the application failed for some reason like excessive rain or cold temperatures. Lastly, if you are thinking about starting your lawn from scratch or switching to a warm season grass, come on in to the garden center now and prepare for your May application. Enjoy the garden!

*Mark*

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