

Maintaining Your Fescue Lawn

By Bob Ary, Extension Agent

Winter still has its hold on us, and you may not be thinking about managing your fescue lawn. However, it is time to get ready for some activities that should happen over the next few months for the best results.

Although fall is the recommended time for establishing or overseeding your fescue lawn, the February-March time frame is the second best choice. If you are establishing a new lawn, sow 5-8 lbs. of seed per thousand square feet. The overseeding rate depends on the stand density of the existing lawn, but a rate of 2-3 pounds per thousand square feet should provide the desired result. **More is not better!** Sowing more seed than is recommended may result in weaker, more disease-prone plants. Keep in mind that the grass could be severely weakened or killed by the high temperatures and drought conditions that may occur in the summer, and watering will probably be necessary.

Spring fertilization recommendations include the application of 1.75 lbs. of ammonium nitrate or near equivalent (34% nitrogen) per 1,000 square feet on March 1 and again on April 15. If a slow release fertilizer is used, the total amount may be applied as a single application on March 1. The fertilizer will provide all of the energy the fescue needs for the spring growth period. No further fertilizer is needed until fall.

As the days begin to warm up, we might begin to see some of those pesky broadleaf weeds in our lawns. Henbit and chickweed are two of the most common winter annuals that will rise up and produce flowers. Broadleaf weed killers are available to help control these and other broadleaf weeds. Always follow label directions when using any pesticide.

With so much rainfall last year, crabgrass was a real problem in lawns. Using a preemergent herbicide will prevent crabgrass from becoming established. The herbicide is available in a granular form that can be applied with a fertilizer spreader. In fact, there are some weed-and-feed products available. The timing of the application is the key to effective control. The rule of thumb is to apply the herbicide between the time the forsythia blooms and the dogwood tree blooms.

Call the Sumner County Extension office at 452-1423 or email bobary@utk.edu if you have questions.