

LAWN CARE TIPS DURING DROUGHT CONDITIONS

Fertilize and Control Weeds

- **Fall is the most critical time to fertilize and control weeds in the lawn.** The stress of this summer has had devastating effects on yards in this area. Once the heat wave breaks, fall is when the yard recovers from the heat of the summer and prepares for the hibernation of winter. Proper fertilization and watering will greatly decrease the chance of winter kill, lawn diseases and insect damage. Once the temperatures decrease and the days get shorter fertilization is a must! Although grass, plants, and trees struggle to survive in drought conditions, weeds thrive. Weed control is important not only for the remainder of the season but for next year too.

Mowing

- A good rule of thumb for mowing is never remove more than one-third of the grass blade at one time. Raise the mowing height of your lawn mower at least one setting higher than the one used during the spring. Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue can be mowed at 3.5 inches during the summer. Mowing higher forces grass to develop and use deeper roots. **Do not mow grass that is dormant.** This only increases the stress to the yard.
- Try mulching, even if you do not have a mulching mower. Let clippings remain on the grass. Lawns tend to lose more water and nutrients through evaporation when clippings are removed.
- Sharpen mower blades at least twice this summer. Dull blades tear grass, forcing grass to use 40-60 percent more water trying to recover from stress.

Aerate

- **FALL AERATIONS** can greatly improve soil conditions after drought conditions. If you did not aerate your lawn this spring, consider doing so in the fall. Aerations create small holes in the ground that allow water to soak deeper into the ground and help promote root growth. During drought conditions the ground becomes drier and more compact. An aeration is an excellent horticultural practice to stimulate root growth and enhance the overall health of your yard.

Watering

- Check in-ground sprinkler systems for leaky valves and heads that may be wasting water. Change timing settings, if appropriate. Identify dry spots by putting a garden stake in the ground. Place portable sprinklers there or readjust in-ground sprinklers so they reach dry spots. Watering from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m. is ideal. Irrigating during the day wastes water, because much of the water evaporates in the heat.
- If water limits are imposed, follow them. Turf does not need to be watered every day. Deep heavy watering will penetrate to the root system. Recommend 1 inch per week when natural rainfall doesn't exist. Watering twice a week, ½ inch each time is recommended to maintain a growing yard.
- Kentucky bluegrass and fescue will not retain their color without watering, but they can survive about a month without water. **The chance of the grass root system NOT surviving drought conditions greatly increases when it doesn't received at least one inch of moisture in a four week period.**

Any questions regarding your lawn, please do not hesitate to call us! Enjoy the rest of the Summer Months. See you soon!

