Look What's Out There

in

Integrated Pest Management

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Issue 9– Oct. 2006
http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/

Organic Lawn Care 101 - Take Simple Steps This Fall to Convert Your Lawn to Organic

Fall is the best time to start transitioning your lawn to organic. The key to a healthy lawn is healthy soil and good mowing, watering and fertilizing practices. Healthy soil contains high organic content and is teeming with biological life. Healthy soil supports the development of healthy grass that is naturally resistant to weeds and pests. In a healthy, fertile and well maintained lawn, diseases and pest problems are rare.

But doesn't it cost more you ask? If your lawn is currently chemically-dependent, initially it may be more expensive to restore the biological life. But, in the long term, it will actually cost you less money. Once established, an organic lawn uses fewer materials, such as water and fertilizers, and requires less labor for mowing and maintenance. More importantly, your lawn will be safe for children, pets and your local drinking water supply.

Getting Started- Late September- Early October

1. Mow High Until the Season Ends – Bad mowing practices cause more problems than any other cultural practice. Mowing with a dull blade makes the turf susceptible to disease and mowing too close invites sunlight in for weeds to take hold.

Keep your blades sharp, or ask your service provider to sharpen their blades frequently. For the last and first mowing, mow down to 2 inches to prevent fungal problems. For the rest of the year keep it at 3-3.5 to shade out weeds and foster deep, drought-resistant roots.

2. Aerate – Compaction is an invitation for weeds. If your lawn is hard, compacted, and full of weeds or bare spots, aerate to help air, water and fertilizer to enter. If you can't stick a screwdriver easily into your soil, it is too compacted. Get together with your neighbors and rent an aerator. Once you have an established, healthy lawn, worms and birds pecking at your soil will aerate it for free!

3. Fertilize, but go easy! – Fertilizing in early fall ensures good growth and root development for your grass. Nitrogen, the most abundant nutrient in lawn fertilizers promotes color and growth. Adding too much nitrogen, or quick release synthetic fertilizers, will result in quicker growth and the need for more mowing. Too much nitrogen can also weaken the grass, alter the pH, and promote disease, insect, and thatch build-up. If applied too late, nutrients can leach directly into nearby surface waters. Be aware of local phosphorus or nitrogen loading concerns. Your soil test results will ensure that you apply only what you need.

Your grass clippings contain 58% of the nitrogen added from fertilizers, improve soil conditions, suppress disease, and reduce thatch and

crabgrass. So, leave the clippings on your lawn. You can also use a mulching mower and leave the leaves on the lawn too.

Compost is an ideal soil amendment, adding the much-needed organic content to your soil and suppressing many turf pathogens. In the fall and spring, preferably after aerating, spread ¼ inch layer of organic or naturally-based compost over your lawn. Compost tea and worm castings are also great additions.

Look for compost or organic slow release fertilizers at your local nursery or order online. A few fertilizers, such as Ringer® Lawn Restore®, are certified by the Organic Materials Review Institute, www.saferbrand.com. North Country Organics has a number of natural fertilizers, including phosphorus-free fertilizers for lawns close to fresh water bodies, www.norganics.com. Others choices include Peaceful Valley Farm Supply www.groworganic.com, Down To Earth's Bio-Turf, www.downtoearthdistributors.com; and Harmony Farm, www.harmonyfarm.com.

4. Overseed With the Right Grass Seed – Once again, Fall is the best time to seed your lawn. Grass varieties differ enormously in their resistance to certain pests, tolerance to climatic conditions, growth habit and appearance. Endophytic grass seed provides natural protection against some insects and fungal diseases - major benefits for managing a lawn organically. Talk to your local nursery about the best seed for your area. Check to see the weed content of the grass seed and that there are no pesticide coatings.

Lastly, develop your tolerance- many plants that are considered weeds in a lawn, have beneficial qualities. Learn to read your "weeds" for what they indicate about your soil conditions. Monocrops do not grow in nature and diversity is a good thing.

For instance, clover- considered a typical weed, is found in soil with low nitrogen levels, compaction issues, and drought stress - conditions that can be alleviated with the above recommendations. However, clover is a beneficial plant that takes free nitrogen from the atmosphere and distributes it to the grass, which helps it grow. Clover roots are extensive and extremely drought resistant, providing significant resources to soil organisms, and staying green long after turf goes naturally dormant.

It is highly recommended that you analyze your soil to determine specific soil needs. Contact your University extension service to find out how to take and send in a soil sample. In addition to nutrients and pH, ask for organic content analysis, and request organic care recommendations. Ideal pH should be between 6.5-7.0, and organic content should be 5% or higher (Beyond Pesticides, September 21, 2006).

Southern Oak Death Disease Detected in Infected Lilac Shrubs

A plant disease that has killed thousands of trees and bushes in California may have just been transferred to Maine.

State horticulturist Ann Gibbs said Friday that a lilac shrub shipped from an Oregon nursery to Agway Garden Centers in Maine has tested positive for the disease Phytophthora ramorum, known as Sudden Oak Death.

In addition to the lilac shrub tested, 13 other lilacs bought from the Oregon nursery were sold by Agway prior to the discovery of the infected bush. They were sold at either Farmingdale, Winslow or Skowhegan Agway locations between late April and June, said Gibbs.

All affected plant material at the centers has been destroyed.

The species of lilac, called Syringa Vulgaris, can be identified by its light purple flower that grows in bunches ranging from 4 to 7 inches long.

Sudden Oak Death earned its name after thousands of oak trees in California became infected in the 1990s. Since then, the disease has spread to more than a dozen species of plants -- in this case, lilacs.

Symptoms of an affected plant are brown-reddish droplets seeping from the bark of the bush, as well as small discolored spots on its leaves, Gibbs said. Transmission of the disease occurs most commonly when water carrying the pathogen transfers from one plant to another. "The sap of one leaf has to touch another leaf," she said.

In 2004, the U.S. Department of Agriculture began regulating the transfer of plants from nurseries in California and Oregon to curb the spread of the disease. Regular surveys over the last three years of more than 70 horticultural business turned up no trace of the disease in Maine, until now (Via Blethen Maine Newspapers Inc., Aug., 12, 2006, By Christian S. Madore, Staff Writer).

Funding Opportunity

- The Northeastern Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Center is pleased to announce the availability of funding through the Northeastern Regional IPM Competitive Grants Program. A Request for Applications (RFA) is posted on the Center's web page at **http://NortheastIPM.org/abou_fund.cfm**. Approximately $610,000 will be available in 2006 to support projects that develop individual pest control tactics, integrate tactics into an IPM system, and develop and implement extension education programs. A letter of intent is required with a deadline of Friday, October 7, 2005. Proposals are due Friday, November 18, 2005.

- The Northeastern Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Center is pleased to announce the availability of funding through its IPM Partnership Grants Program for 2006. A Request for Applications (RFA) is posted on the Center's website at **http://northeastipm.org/abou_fund.cfm** , where it can be downloaded in various formats. Approximately $465,000 is available to support projects that will address or develop regional IPM priorities and will further the mission of the Northeastern IPM Center. Proposals are due Friday, December 15, 2005

Agricultural and Environmental News

- Azinphos-methyl and vinclozolin, two of the potentially hazardous pesticides approved by the European Commission for seven more years, were given the green light by EU agriculture ministers last week (Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News: September 25, 2006, Volume 8, Issue 185).

- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has outlined the benefits and challenges of adopting an international system for labeling and classifying chemicals and is seeking public input on the potential impact the system could have on its current communication standard for hazardous materials (Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News: September 20, 2006, Volume 8, Issue 182).

- The European Commission has concluded that transgenic rice from the United States and China found in Europe is illegal and must be recalled, but it is unlikely to pose any health dangers (Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News: September 22, 2006, Volume 8, Issue 184).

- The U.S. government's research on the potential health and environmental risks of nanotechnology has been "limited and inconclusive," according to a report released Sept. 25 by the National Research Council. Until better information is available, the report recommended, "it is prudent to employ some precautionary measures to protect the health and safety of workers, the public, and the environment."

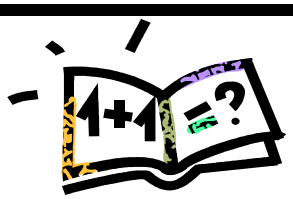
Did You Know That

Emissions of the most potent greenhouse gas, sulfur hexafluoride (SF6), could be history in less than four years, according to results of pilot tests conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency and the magnesium industry.

Comment Section

If there are any comments from the information presented, please let us know by sending an e-mail to: jbanieck@wvu.edu

Events



December 3-6, 2006
4th International Bemisia Workshop.
Hawk's Cay Resort, Duck Key, Florida USA
For more information, please click
http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/bemisia/

December 7-8, 2006
International Whitefly Genomics Workshop
Hawk's Cay Resort, Duck Key, Florida USA
For more information, please click
http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/bemisia/

January 28-31, 2007
National Plant Diagnostic Network, National Meeting, Orlando, FL.
This event will be held at the Wyndham Orlando Resort. More details coming soon.