

The week ahead

- TUESDAY HEALTHY LIVING**
COOL WORKOUTS: Alternative ways to exercise without breaking (too much) of a sweat
- WEDNESDAY TASTE**
OKTOBERFEST: 5 things you may not have known, and where to celebrate if you can't make it to Munich
- NEXT WEEK HOME**
VICTORIAN RESTORATION: One woman chronicled her toil while gutting and remodeling her historic Plano home

Today on dallasnews.com

Estate sale
Video: See the Earl of Spencer talk shop about his Althorp furniture reproductions during a stop in Dallas.
dallasnews.com/lifestyles



Runway report
From New York: Read what our writers are saying about Fashion Week.
dallasnews.com/shoppingbuzz

Food news
Blog: If you love food, bookmark Taste's Eats blog, which has the freshest news on what's hot, fab and flavorful around Dallas.
dallasnews.com/eats

HOME

© 2007 The Dallas Morning News
dallasnews.com
Features Editor: Cathy Barber
Home Editor: Mariana Greene
Assistant Editor: Misty Bailey
CONTACT US
Phone: 214-977-8834
E-mail: home@dallasnews.com
Mail: P.O. Box 655237
Dallas, TX 75265
Advertising: 214-977-8000

CHORES

Ounce of pre-emergent worth hours of weeding

By **RICK ROSEN**
Staff Writer
rosen@dallasnews.com

Now is the time to spread pre-emergents to prevent weeds from popping up this winter. But should you use tried-and-true chemicals? Is it time to go organic? Or can you skip pre-emergents altogether? Both organic and non-organic experts agree that the best defense against weeds is healthy turf. A strong stand of grass crowds out weeds and prevents weed seeds from germinating. But if you have weak turf and strong weeds, pre-emergents can help.



File photo

Pre-emergent herbicides work by killing weed seeds as they germinate. They also block other seeds from sprouting. If you plan to overseed your lawn with rye grass or some other grass for a green winter lawn, do not apply a pre-emergent.

Post-emergent herbicides can take care of dandelions. Or, hit them after they emerge with products such as Roundup.

Chemical pre-emergent

If chemical pre-emergents are not applied correctly, much of the toxic material can end up in the water supply. Their advantage is that they have been proved to be effective. Synthetic herbicides, if you choose to use them, should be applied now. Early September is the optimal time in North Texas, experts say, to control such winter weeds as annual rye, chickweed, rescue grass and annual bluegrass. Dr. James McAfee, Texas Cooperative Extension turfgrass specialist in Dallas, says the products simply won't work if applied too late.

Here's how to apply chemical pre-emergents:

- Measure your lawn so you know how much to buy.
- Spread the granules with a fertilizer spreader. (For uniform coverage, apply half as you walk north and south, then spread the other half while walking east and west.)
- Water lawns immediately or at least within a day or two. Dr. McAfee says to give your lawn about half an inch.
- A second application, in late December or early January, may be necessary if winters are mild and rainy.
- Don't apply in heavily shaded areas. Turf in shady

areas is already under stress. Pre-emergents could do further damage, Dr. McAfee says.

To kill winter broadleaf weeds, you can apply post-emergent herbicides, or you can zap them after they emerge with products such as Roundup and Finale. While post-emergent herbicides can be used to control winter grassy weeds, these products should only be used once the warm-season turfgrasses are completely dormant, according to Dr. McAfee.

He also notes that regular mowing, irrigation and fertilization are key to maintaining a healthy lawn year-round.

Organic pre-emergent

Organic gardeners can use corn gluten meal as a natural pre-emergent. Its advantage, in addition to being natural, is that corn gluten meal also acts as a fertilizer. Thus, you might be able to eliminate both weeds and the need to buy fertilizer. Its disadvantage, according to Paul Tukey, author of *The Organic Lawn Care Manual*, is that corn gluten meal is only 65 percent as effective as synthetic pre-emergents.

Dallas organic gardening expert Howard Garrett, on his Web site, says the best time to apply it is Sept. 15, but you can

apply it up until mid-October. Here are steps to applying corn gluten meal:

- Measure your lawn so you know how much to buy.
- Spread 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet, using a fertilizer spreader.
- Water in thoroughly so it won't attract animals or create a foul odor.
- You can use corn gluten meal when overseeding rye grass or other cool-season crops, says Mr. Garrett, but you must wait until the grass has germinated and started to grow. Mr. Tukey says not to overseed within six weeks of using corn gluten meal.
- There's no need to fertilize in fall if you use corn gluten meal, Mr. Garrett and others say. It contains about 8 to 10 percent nitrogen.

Mr. Garrett says that most weeds won't be a problem if you build up the organic matter in your lawn. He also recommends pulling up weeds by hand and spot-spraying with vinegar-based herbicides. Add 1 ounce of orange oil or d-limonene, plus 1 teaspoon of liquid soap to 1 gallon of 10 percent vinegar. Do not add water.

Are mushrooms bad for my yard?

After all the rain this year, we have scores of small mushrooms growing in our yard. What soil conditions cause the outbreak of mushrooms, and are they harmful to the lawn? Does the soil need an additive to correct an imbalance of some mineral?
S.D., Dallas

ORGANIC ANSWERS



HOWARD GARRETT
home@dallasnews.com

Mushrooms grow because there is decaying organic matter in the soil. Extra moisture amplifies the growth. These fruiting bodies of fungi are harmless and beneficial. If you feel you must kill them, you can use an organic disease-control spray such as a solution of 1 rounded tablespoon of baking soda and a gallon of water.

We have a shaded flower bed where we planted English ivy two years ago. It is not doing well. If we add Persian ivy, what will the results be?

L.T., Granbury

I have planted Persian ivy in the same beds as English ivy, and it is thriving and taking over. That's a good plan.

My red-tip photinias are dying. I've been told by a nursery that excessive rain is the culprit. But why are only a few of the shrubs turning brown? I took foliage samples to the nursery and was told that it is not a fungus.

M.R., Springtown

You need another nursery. The fungus is in the soil working on the roots. Later, symptoms move to the leaves. This is a widespread problem with photinias.

The solution is to use the Sick Tree Treatment, which

will save red-tip photinias. Too much water and poor drainage encourage the fungus, so these conditions need to be corrected, too. (See Resources for details.)

I have a live oak that is dropping about a hundred or more leaves each day. The leaves have turned brown and have dark spots on them. Quite a few lower branches have no leaves and look as if they are dead. What do you recommend?

M.W., Dallas

Hot weather after a long wet spring is causing defoliation. This is very common, and the solution for most live oaks is to relax and do nothing. My Sick Tree Treatment helps all trees if you have the time and budget to use it. (See Resources for details.)

Our pecan trees are loaded with huge pecans, and the limbs are breaking. The leaves on the broken limbs are still green, so will the pecans survive and ripen?

C.B., Lampasas

This spring's rains caused heavy nut production. Overloaded limbs can be

propped up, but that's a lot of trouble. Pecans on broken limbs probably won't mature.

Most folks do some pruning to relieve weight on important limbs, or they wait and do corrective pruning after breakage occurs.

Last year, during the drought, a family of small lizards moved into our yard. We have glue boards in our garage to catch mice. Last summer, we started catching lizards on the boards, and then we started catching small snakes that were trying to eat the lizards. Some of the snakes are garden snakes, but some look ominous. What can we do to discourage the lizards so that the snakes go away?

J.A., McKinney

The lizards and the snakes are beneficial and help control pests. Lizards should be protected, and only poisonous snakes such as coral snakes, rattlesnakes and water moccasins should be killed. You'll find good information about snakes on the Internet and in books by Texas authors.

Besides the Eldarica pine, which pines do you suggest for West Texas?

K.J., Lubbock

Eldarica pines do well in West Texas. The trees need low rainfall and little irrigation. Another good choice is the Italian stone pine.

RESOURCES

ONLINE: www.dirtdoctor.com for free organic-program handouts

PASS IT ON

Pass It On is a free service for readers who want to donate unwanted items. To submit, e-mail home@dallasnews.com. Offerings are accepted up to one week before publication. Requests for items are not accepted.

OFFERINGS

- Propane bottle.** Refillable. Call after 8 a.m. Hal, Grand Prairie, 972-641-4035.
- Bricks.** 80-100 count. Take all. You haul. Jean, Richardson, 214-384-5407.
- Chambers cook top.** Electric, with four burners and a griddle-broiler. 42 inches long by 25 inches wide by 8 inches deep. Rick, Colleyville, 817-267-5928.
- Coral canna bulbs.** At least 25. You dig on the first Saturday in October. Call after 8 a.m. Joyce, Plano, 214-274-8818.

FOR A NONPROFIT

American Standard toilet from a 7-year-old house. You haul. Call after 8 a.m. Joyce, Plano, 214-274-8818.

Sigrid Mureen

Shopping the town

Anniversary sale

Forestwood Antique Mall is celebrating its anniversary Sept. 13 through 18 with sales and special events throughout the mall. Get home furnishings, jewelry, clock repair, framing – all at special prices. Enjoy entertainment, wine and hors d'oeuvres from 4 to 6 p.m. on Saturday. **Forestwood Antique Mall**, 5333 Forest Lane, Dallas. Open 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. daily. 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. Sunday, 972-661-0001.

New scents

Kenneth Turner room spray, candles and potpourri have arrived at Rutherford's. Enjoy popular scents like honeysuckle, lemon, orange and clove oils with cinnamon. Also, Oscar de la Renta's new candles in the scent of Home. New Products and New City Scent are in stock. **Rutherford's**, 5417 West Lovers Lane, 214-357-0888. Stop by the warehouse at 7411 Hines Place during our next sale, Sept. 20 – 22. www.rutherforddesign.com.

A Dallas Tradition.

celebrating 50 years of success!

To advertise, contact your Dallas Morning News account representative or Denise Sanders at 214-977-2044.