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LAWN AND GARDEN

How to maintain a weed free lawn

(NAPS)-If you are among the 50 million homeowners trying their best to maintain a healthy, weed-free lawn, you're also and environmental steward. Most people don't realize it, but healthy lawns add not only attractiveness but also positive benefits to the environment.

In fact, a healthy, weed-free lawn:

•Reduces soil erosion. Dense grass is the best natural surface for trapping precipitation and reducing soil erosion. This excess water nourishes grass and trees before soaking through the topsoil and replenishing groundwater supplies.

•Increases air quality. Healthy grass areas trap almost 12 million tons of dust and dirt from the air annually. Just one acre of grass can absorb hundreds of pounds of fossil fuel-created sulfur dioxide in a single year.

•Increases property values. A well-maintained lawn can increase the value of a home by as much as 15 percent.

•Restores nutrients. By grasscycling (leaving clippings on the lawn and allowing them to decay), you returns a large amount of nutrients to the lawn that help it grow.

But just how do you maintain a weed-free, healthy lawn? Remember to:

• Cut grass to proper height. Taller grass filters out light that weeds desperately need, making it easier for grass to choke out weeds. Contact the County Extension Agent for mowing heights of your turfgrass type.

• Water your lawn deeply and infrequently. On average, lawns need about on inch of water a week. This on inch soaks to a depth of four to six inches, which allows the water to reach deep into the root system.

• Prevent weeds right now. Instead of fighting grassy weeds after the fact, stop them before they emerge with a weed prevention product containing a pre-emergence herbicide. This type of herbicide sets-up a "weed prevention zone" around weed seedlings which stops the weeds from germinating. The weeds die before they ever reach the soil surface.

Pre-emergence herbicides can be found in a variety of brand-name weed prevention products available at local garden and hardware stores.

Always read an d follow all label directions carefully when using lawn care products.

White grubs can cause severe lawn and garden damage

(NAPS) - White grubs. Even their name sounds, well, grubby. But the damage they can do to your lawn is even worse, if you don't take steps to protect them now.

White grubs are the larval stage of scarab beetles, of which there are 1,500 different species in North America. Only afew, though, cause serious damage to lawns.

In general, adult beetles vary in color from light brown to green and brown to nearly black. You might recognize them as the beetles that fly into lights on summer nights. During June and July, adult beetlesof most species feed at night on tree and shrub foilage, but cause little or no damage. One exception is the adult Japanese beetle which feeds during the day and can cause severe defoliation to nearly 300 plant species.

In winter females fly to lawn areas, burrow through the thatch and into the soil where they deposit eggs. The eggs hatch into tiny grubs or larva within two to four weeks. These grubs are C-shaped, vary from white to off-white and, depending on the species, range from about 1/4 inch to 1-1/2 inches long when fully developed.

A few grubs won't hurt a lawn. But when populations are high, as they can be in Kentucky, these pests feed on the lawn's root system and cause severe damage.

Nicholas County Extension Agent, Mike Phillips, suggests a product known as Dursban for a lawn having grub problems.

Phillips stated that timingand amount of application is crucial to the productivity of this chemical. "Keep in mind that this product will kill fishing worms, which are very benficial to soil quality, and can contaminate ground water if not used in a controlled manner. said Phillips.

Phillips suggested that application of this product should begin sometime in mid-May and continue, following product guidelines, until late August.

Nicholas County Extension Agent, Mike Phillips says:

- Begin fruit tree spray applications now.
- Winter injury to shrubs can cause curb growing potential. Remove dead or injured limbs and branches now.
- Remove thatch build up on your lawn now. Thatch can smother young growth and choke potentially healthy yard.
- Keep crabgrass under control.
- Contrary to popular belief, spring is not the best time for fertilization of your lawn, it is better to fertilize in the fall.

For answers to these and many other gardening questions, call the Nicholas County Extension Office at 289-2312.

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