

Fall Newsletter 2010

This summer has been one for the record books. Record heat, record rain-fall (heavy deluges in concentrated areas) in the Piedmont of North Carolina and really high heat indexes have combined to kill retail sales during July and August. We are used to the sales slacking off during these months but this was still very unusual. Let's all pray for cooler weather and a continuation of gentle rain showers this fall.

This summer was also murder on lawns in the Piedmont! I have never seen diseases punch holes in lawns like this year. We normally see brown patch, red thread and a little pythium blight affect lawns for a short period and then the lawns grow out of it. Not this year; it started early and stayed around for the killing punch. Fungicide treatments are expensive and we normally do not recommend them (I am sticking to my guns on this one). Check out the price of 'Heritage' and other good fungicides on-line. That will sober a client up quickly. That is why we do not carry these fungicides at the store. In fact I checked the online price for 4 ounces of 50% active ingredient Heritage at \$158.68. The average application rate for one thousand feet of grass is .20 to .40 ounces per thousand square feet every 21 to 28 days. Do the math at .30 ounces per thousand (average) and the chemical alone comes out to \$11.90 per thousand square feet. Add in a pesticide applicators labor and you can see why I am hesitant to take your money. Ten thousand square feet of lawn treated once is going to cost you on average at least \$180.00 dollars. I will say that the on-line price of heritage is ridiculous compared to what we get it for and we would pass the lower chemical cost on to our clients. Over-seeding in the fall is much less expensive. I know some turf applicators do not want to see me writing this but it is the truth. AND....we had multiple periods of brown patch conditions this year in

some areas of the Piedmont! The record heat and the 2 to 6 inch rains really clobbered your yards in another way. Crabgrass and other weeds have been rampant in yards that were even treated twice with pre-emergent herbicides. Deb and I live at 110 Woodstaff Drive in Kernersville, North Carolina. I am giving you the address because even we have a front yard full of crab grass and I am going to have to really over seed this fall. I have never applied a lot of herbicides to our yard because it is thick and mowed very high. Usually we have almost no weeds at all. This year even we lost the weed battle in the front yard. Amazingly, our back yard still looks great. It is surrounded by a six foot privacy fence, faces south and has a number of trees around the perimeter of the lawn. Is it possible to kill the crabgrass and not the good fescue grasses? The answer is yes but at what cost. One of the best and few products available is a product called "Drive". Drive's chemical name is quinclorac. It kills crabgrass after it has emerged (post-emergent) as well as other grasses and broad leafed weeds such as dandelions and clover. The problem is once you kill crabgrass in the Piedmont, you are going to have a difficult time re-establishing fine fescues until September. Drive may be used right before re-seeding which is a distinct advantage. Apply Drive in late August and you should not get a re-growth of crabgrass before over seeding (We hope). Nutsedge is another monster that has reared its head this summer. Yards that have never exhibited the existence of nutsedge are now covered in it. No, it did not come in last year's over-seeding of the lawn. Good tagged grass seed is not going to be full of nutsedge. Nutsedge can lie dormant in your yard for up to three years. Get heat and excess moisture in your area and there it is. We try to walk a fine line between a good lawn and a great one. The difference in the two can be quite a lot of money and sometimes in a year like this all the money in the world will not keep the lawn looking perfect.

Speaking of grass, September and October are great months for renovation work so get ready. We will have several grass seed blends available by the first week of September as well as a good pair of fertilizer blends that are golf course grade as always.

In September we will have pansies, flowering cabbage, kale and one of our best assortments of shrubs for fall planting. Our pansy selection is very good this year.

We have the Plentifall series which can grow up to eighteen inches across! They are great for baskets and covering large areas. We also grow XXL pansies, the Mammoth series and the standard varieties as well. If we do not have what you are looking for we will try to get it for you or refer you to someone who does have them. We want to mention Teresa and James Myers of Myers Greenhouses on Stratford Road in Winston Salem. These folks do a wonderful job growing one of the best tropical and annual selections in the Piedmont. Their number is 336-659-7950. We call them frequently for off the wall houseplants and annuals.

During the month of October we will have all our hydrangeas and hardy ferns on sale 20% off. We have an excellent selection on hand. October is also the month we start planting larger trees and shrubs in the Piedmont. Mild days and cooler nights allow the plants to continue growing roots at this time of the year. If you plant in October, it is much easier to keep the plants alive as the moisture transpiration rate is lower. You still need to water the plants at least three times a week for a couple of weeks, transition to twice a week for three or four weeks then once a week. Do not rely on irrigation to water your plants the first few weeks...water the plants with a gentle direct flow. Remember that evergreen plants require a bit more water than plants that lose their leaves in the fall. That is a general rule of thumb for watering. Please feel free to ask us about specific plant watering requirements.