

In the wee hours of July 30, 2012, I awakened to the sound of thunder. What seemed an unfamiliar sound caused me to momentarily smile, roll over and fall back to sleep. Later, much to our surprise, as Rita and I headed outdoors for our traditional morning cup of coffee, we were thrilled to see our trees and flowers dripping from a recent shower. As the morning sun peeked through the treetops, the droplets of rainwater clinging to the leaves sparkled like tiny jewels. The air was clean, filled with the uplifting scent of freshly fallen rain. At that very moment, even though I know plants cannot speak, I somehow felt that they, too, were cheering with delight. It had been over a month since Minden received any measurable rain. The rain gauge read eighty-five hundredths of an inch.

I would like to remain optimistic and think that perhaps the drought is over. However, knowing that August is typically our hottest month of the year and often the driest, I remain a tad bit pessimistic. Apparently my colleagues at the University of Nebraska feel the same way. They recently created a new website that offers valuable information which not only addresses managing drought-stricken crops, but also valued tips on protecting landscape vegetation from drought. One can access this helpful website by clicking <http://droughtresources.unl.edu/>. Once you open the homepage, click on Home and Garden and an assortment of drought-related topics for the homeowner will appear.

I found one particular resource to be of great interest, especially for those with bluegrass lawns that are now parched and brown. The title of this valuable resource is *Strategies for Saving Drought-Plagued Lawns and Gardens* written by horticulture specialist John Jett. Specialist Jett offers thirteen effective strategies for managing lawns during periods of hot and dry weather. They include the following:

1. Learn to recognize wilting in turf plants.
2. Allow dormancy to happen.
3. Water for the correct length of time.
4. Reduce fertilization rate.
5. Reduce mowing frequency.
6. Sharpen the mower blade.
7. Raise the mowing height.
8. Return clippings back to the lawn.
9. Designate “hydro zones” in your landscape.
10. Avoid edging the lawn.
11. Reduce traffic on the lawn.
12. Avoid herbicide use.
13. Check the quality of the irrigation water.

Each valuable strategy is explained fully at this website. For those who do not have access to the internet and would appreciate receiving a copy of Mr. Jett’s report, I encourage you to stop by the Extension office and pick up a copy. I’m certain that if one follows his management skills, it should make the difference between a lawn that survives and one that dies.

It is my wish that you also were fortunate enough to experience this past Monday morning's much needed, wonderful rain shower. It certainly lifted my spirits and fueled my optimism. Although experience tells me that one good shower is certainly no guarantee that this excessive heat and drought will be drawing to a close, I am sure of one thing— it offers hope. Only time will tell.