

Summer Watering, Fertilizers, Fungicides

It is during this time of the year that we all get tired of going outside in the heat and humidity and we start to allow our plants to just grow on their own. This time of the year, however, is when they need a lot of care to deal with the heat and humidity. There are many other conditions that we need to deal with in our vegetable gardens, lawns, and tree and shrub plantings.

With the heat and humidity, our trees can start to show heat stress. If your tree leaves are starting to turn brown from the tip of the leaves inward, they are probably just hot and dry. You need to make sure that you are watering your trees deeply and slowly. To do this, you can allow the hose to trickle on the tree for about one hour, and then move it to the other side of the tree and let it trickle there for another hour. This is to get the soil deeply saturated to help the plant deal with the heat stress. Shrubs and perennials need to be watered this way as well, to ensure that they do not get too dry. Vegetable gardens need around 1 inch of water per week to ensure that they don't get too dry.

It is not a great idea to use fertilizers or weed control on your lawns at this time of the year. The grass plants are already stressed from the high heat and humidity, putting fertilizer on your yard at this time will burn your lawn. This is also true with herbicides. Even though 2-4,D is not usually harmful to your yard, at this time of the year when it is so hot, it can actually burn the grass plants surrounding the area where you spray. The only thing you should be doing to your yard at this time of the year is mowing it, longer is better, and watering it to keep it from going dormant.

Fungicides may be used if turf fungal diseases appear in your yard. The most common turf diseases I am seeing right now are dollar spot, brown patch, and summer patch. Dollar spot and brown patch are characterized by small patches of brown grass throughout your lawn. Dollar spot has lesions that go all the way across the blade and have a reddish-brown margin around the lesion. Brown patch has lesions with a dark-brown margin that are irregularly shaped and do not usually span the width of the grass blade. Summer patch commonly occurs in the hot weather of the summer and it shows up more often in turf that is regularly irrigated. Summer patch usually shows up as an area of dead or brown grass with an area of green grass in the center, giving it a frog-eye appearance. These patches are usually about 6-12 inches across. If you think you have summer patch you can pull up the grass and see if the roots are black in color. Daconil will work for dollar spot and brown patch while Fungo, Banner, or Sentinel can be applied to summer patch for control. You may use fungicides to control lawn diseases, however, all fungal diseases will go away when then environmental conditions change, and there is not always a need to treat them. If you can handle a small amount of imperfection for a while, you can just let it go without the use of fungicide treatments. This information was courtesy Roch Gaussoin, Ph. D. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension.

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