

Is it Time to?

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Is it time to? This is a common question asked of Extension, especially about lawns and landscapes. Since timing is often important for success, it is a great question to ask.

Fall is a good time to plant trees so here's a reminder of our upcoming tree planting demonstration. If you always thought trees should be planted at the same depth they are in their containers, please attend to learn the correct depth. Trees planted too deep grow slower and tend to have more problems.

This free demonstration will be held Tuesday, September 20 at 6:30 PM at Pawnee Park in Columbus just east of Pawnee Plunge water park. Extension Master Gardeners and I will be planting two Memorial trees to show correct planting along with care of young trees.

Other than most shade trees and shrubs, perennials can also be fall planted. The sooner the better for perennials to allow more time for root development. It will be important to keep the soil of fall planted plants moist up until soil freeze.

Do not apply nitrogen at planting and in most cases a starter fertilizer with phosphorous (P) is not needed. This nutrient is important for root development but most soils are high in P and it is readily available in warm soils. After the soil freezes cover fall planted perennials with winter mulch to prevent soil from freezing and thawing during winter and damaging young roots.

While now is a good time to plant many things, it's a bad time to prune woody plants. Late summer through fall is the one time we discourage pruning woody plants like shade or evergreen trees, including fruit and ornamental trees and roses. We also discourage pruning during drought stress.

Pruning at this time of year can delay hardening off for winter. On evergreens, new growth could be stimulated that would likely die over winter. We see more winter kill on fall pruned roses. Trees have better wound response with spring or early summer pruning and when they are not drought stressed.

The best time to prune deciduous trees and evergreens like Japanese Yew, spruce and arborvitae is spring just before new growth begins or from late spring to mid-summer as needed. Pines are best pruned in June.

While now is a good time to fertilize cool season lawns, it's a bad time to fertilize trees and shrubs. This is challenging since many trees grow in lawns. To help trees, know that lawns older than 10 years only need two fertilizations a year. And trees growing in lawns do not need additional N-P-K fertilizer. Don't waste money at any time of year fertilizing trees growing in or near lawns. Excess nitrogen increases a trees susceptibility to insect and disease attack.

For pest control, timing is everything. Whether it's an insect, disease or weed and whether organic or synthetic controls are used, timing is important for effective control. For the most part, there are very few diseases or insects we recommend management for at this time of year other than mechanical like picking bagworms off of evergreens or sanitation such as removing diseased plant parts.

When a plant shows signs or symptoms, always have the cause positively identified before using a control method, especially pesticides. In many cases, control is not even needed or the cause is environmental rather than a pest.

If pesticides are a chosen control method, most only work if applied during a certain time of a pests (weed, insect or disease) life cycle. Ask at your local Extension office when this is to responsibly use control methods and to have success in protecting plants when needed.