



Fall Lawn Care

Leaf it on Your Lawn

Grass clippings and leaves return nutrients and organic matter to your lawn and soil, and prevent soil compaction caused by rain and foot traffic. Too many? Instead of bagging them, use excess leaf material in garden beds or add it to your compost bin for a good carbon (“brown”) source. Dead leaves also provide cover for wildlife during the colder months. According the National Wildlife Federation, “Removing leaves also eliminates vital wildlife habitat. Critters ranging from turtles and toads to birds, mammals and invertebrates rely on leaf litter for food, shelter and nesting material. Many moth and butterfly caterpillars overwinter in fallen leaves before emerging in spring.”* Are you eligible for a rebate on your compost bin, native plants, or rain barrel? Check communitybackyards.org.

Get Your Lawn On

Late summer (between Mid-August and mid-September) is good time for over-seeding thin lawns and filling in bare spots. The soil is still warm for good root development and seeds sprout quickly. Cut the grass as short as possible, and spread seed over a de-thatched or aerated lawn.

Fall is For Fertilization

University research shows that fall is the best time to fertilize, since shorter days and cooler temperatures encourage root growth. The grass will use what fertilizer is available this fall, while the remaining nutrients are frozen in the soil to be used in the spring when the soil warms. Organic fertilizers are typically slow-release and provide some benefits to the soil, while synthetic products are quickly available to the plant and provide immediate growth and greening.

Fertilizers and Water Quality

- ✓ Look for products with a higher percentage of slow-release forms of nitrogen. Quick-release products may not be able to be absorbed by the plants in time, and can move offsite quickly.
- ✓ Don't fertilize the sidewalks, driveways, or roads (they won't grow!) Wind and water can carry it to storm drains that empty directly into your nearest stream.
- ✓ Don't apply to frozen or very dry soils.
- ✓ Use special care around water sources like ponds and streams. A buffer or “no fertilizer” zone of 10-25 feet prevents contamination that can lead to algae growth.

*Laura Tangley. “Why You Should Leave the Leaves.” National Wildlife Federation. Web. 02 March 2017.

Learn More and Pledge for Clean Water at getgrassy.org

Program support comes from the following communities:

