

Turfgrass Tips

While some of you may be singing “Take me out to the ballgame” and cheering on your favorite team, others may be singing ‘take me out to the garden’ and cheering on your favorite plant. Whatever your choice, this is the time to enjoy them.

Whether we’re hanging out at the local ballpark or just in the back yard, the one thing we concentrate on the most in the landscape is our turf. We will probably spend more time mowing grass over the next few months than doing any other kind of yard-work. Here are a few suggestions to make this summer chore more manageable.

First of all, you should know what type of grass (lawn) that you have, since they are not all created equal. Bermudagrass requires full sun to grow well and can tolerate higher levels of fertilizers and chemicals. This is the grass type that is on most athletic fields. Centipede and Zoysia grasses can grow in sun and partial shade. Neither requires a great deal of fertilizer or herbicides once established, but they are not as tolerant to wear as Bermudagrass. St. Augustine can tolerate the most shade and can also grow in full-sun. In extremely shaded areas, you might consider using a groundcover such as: Liriope, Ajuga, Vinca or Jasimne.

A few turf problems you might encounter this summer are: dollar spot, brown patch, fire ants, and weeds. Dollar Spot appears as small, coin-sized dark spots in the turf and sometimes can have a white web appearance. A light application of nitrogen will usually correct this. Brown Patch occurs in much larger areas and must be treated with a labeled fungicide.

Fire-ants can create numerous headaches and there are many products sold on the market as controls. Many of these products seem to move the mounds from one location to another. Best results will occur when fire-ant baits are applied. These products actually kill the mound and provide longer control. Look for products containing fipronil, spinosad or fenoxycarb in the active ingredient.

Weeds are also a major source of headache for many homeowners. As with turf diseases, weed identification is a must. There are many products available to control weeds, such as: Atrazine, MSMA and Trimec-Plus, but not all herbicides can be used on all grasses. Make sure to check the label for your turf type and always follow the directions!

To find out more about turfgrasses, check with your local MSU Extension Service office and pick up a copy of Publication # 1322 – Establish and Mange Your Home Lawn.

Dr. Jeff Wilson is a horticulturist serving northeast Mississippi with Mississippi State University’s Extension Service.