TURF

August in the Northeast and North Central states is the beginning of fall. The soil is still warm, but we see the return of rain after a normally dry June and July. Further, the day length, or photoperiod, is still long enough to sustain growth. Landscape development is certainly centered on three broad categories: 1) turf; 2) grass seed mixture; and 3) deciduous tree pruning.

The conditions of warm soil encourage root growth. The only cautions to August pruning would include: pruning of crab apples during wet periods, thus encouraging fire blight, and pruning of elms. Hart at Michigan State University suggested that wounds on elms during August may attract bark beetle, thus it could be a factor in late season Dutch Elm Disease infection. Other than these two considerations, most trees, including bleeders, such as Sugar Maple and birch, respond well to late summer pruning.

PINE PLANTING

August represents the single best time to transplant pines in the landscape. Although spring transplanting results in 80-90% success, transplanting of pines during August usually results in 95% of greater success. The conditions of warm soil encourage root growth. Frequent showers, high humidity, and relatively long photo-period combine for this one plant genus’s transplanting success. For most success, transplant the pines balled and burlapped. During the ‘60’s some of the early photoperiodic researchers showed that pine roots continued to grow during August and September under that particular day length even though vegetative growth had stopped. This single factor probably best explains the success of pine transplanting in August. The pine roots have opportunity to become established before the onslaught of winter. Many landscapers have noted that staking and heavy mulching also contribute to late season transplanting success. Does this mean that hemlock and junipers also exhibit the same increased planting success? In the case of these plants, the literature and practical experience have not been as clear. Junipers, hemlocks, and spruce transplant relatively well throughout the month of September and early October if mulched heavily.

Late season insects and diseases can have some impact; therefore, one should be looking for extremely heavy infestations of mites (two-spotted or red), aphids, scale, and walnut caterpillar. Diseases to be on the lookout for are few but important. If an extremely wet August, fire blight on crab apple, hawthorn, and mountain ash and needlecast on pine can be problems.

AUGUST JOB FOCUS

1. Turf
   a. planting new lawns
   b. fertilization
2. Deciduous Tree Pruning
3. Pine Planting
   a. transplanting
   b. late season insects and diseases
4. Continued Heavy Maintenance
   a. mowing and weeding

By Douglas Chapman, horticulturist, Dow Gardens, Midland, MI