

LANDSCAPE LOG

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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

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) deciduous tree pruning; and 3) pine planting.

TURF

August in Central Michigan and through the Northeast is the *one* single best time to plant new lawns (while spring is a *second* prime time for new lawn installation). The soil temperature is high and the air temperature is beginning to cool. By the second week of August fall rains commence and almost every morning we have dew on the grass. The above-mentioned conditions are perfect for new lawn installation. The weed season is essentially over, and one can install a new lawn, while expecting almost complete success with minimal weed seed germination.

Each part of the country will have different recommended grass types, but it should be recognized that a grass seed mixture is probably better than any one individual cultivar. It is better due to the fact that there is more environmental tolerance and insect and disease resistance with a broad variety of grass types than with a single cultivar—the same consideration as with trees, the greater the variety of species, in general, the more disease tolerance one can expect. In the Great Lakes area, a mixture of 60% fescue [cv. of creeping red or chewings], 20% Kentucky Bluegrass, and 20% fine leaf perennial ryegrass, e.g. Manhattan Perennial Rye, establishes quickly, while being medium to low maintenance. The individual cultivars of bluegrass, fescue and fine leaf perennial ryegrass will change as new ones are developed, but the concept of a mixture of grasses, emphasizing disease resistance and low in nutrient requirements, will probably result in the type of lawn that fits best a large area landscape, park, or even home grounds.

Fertilizer, depending on the program one uses, is also important during mid-to-late August. One should apply the equivalent of approximately one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, while emphasizing potassium as well (five pounds of a 20-5-10). Most fertilizer recommendations are based on the amount of nitrogen applied per 1,000 square feet. Contemporary research has shown that relatively high quantities of potassium are also important to stimulate carbohydrate metabolism, while increasing

disease tolerance, drought, and winter hardiness. Generally speaking, phosphorus deficiency is difficult to induce in the average lawn. Most cool season grass species are effective extractors of this macronutrient and, therefore, small quantities are all that are needed. Note—with all fertilizers, the lawn should be dry and the fertilizer watered in soon after application.

DECIDUOUS TREE PRUNING

The month of August is a good time to prune deciduous trees. Most of the terminal and diameter increase, that is plant growth has occurred and, physiologically, it has been shown that there is a good wound response at **this time**. For years nurserymen removed suckers and unwanted branches during this month. They took advantage of the foliage being on the plant as long as practical, thus adding dimension to the tree trunk but removing the unwanted growth at a time when the plants callused over most rapidly. 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 elm 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 encourages root growth. Frequent showers, high humidity, and relatively long photo-period combine for this one plant genera'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 juniper 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.

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