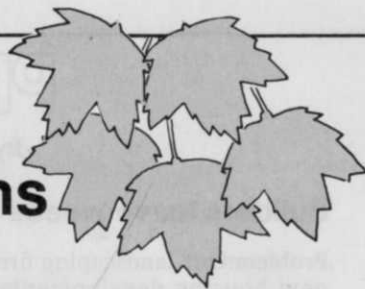


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When leaves fall, work remains

NOVEMBER JOB FOCUS

1. Deciduous Tree and Shrub Planting
2. Mulching and Winter Protection
3. Fall Turf Fertilization
4. Dormant Lawn Seeding

November's maintenance log includes projects that assure next year's landscape. The tasks that highlight November are deciduous tree and shrub planting, mulching and winter protection, fall turf fertilization, and dormant lawn seeding.

Moving deciduous plants

After deciduous trees and shrubs have lost their leaves, one can easily transplant them with a high degree of success. The plant's size should really dictate whether to transplant balled and burlapped or bare root. Considering a commercial landscape, most trees and shrubs should be transplanted B and B. Why? Although the plants are dormant, there are still needs for water and a full knowledge that winter conditions are a severe stress on trees and shrubs. When transplanting B and B, not only is the chance of frost heaving reduced, but also the root system is kept moist and, therefore, ready to initiate growth in the spring. After heavily watering the new transplant, one should also mulch heavily. This heavy mulch over the root system helps reduce the effects of winter; reduces water loss and modifies temperature extremes.

Winter protection

Generally, winter protection is designed to reduce or modify the harsh conditions of winter. For evergreens that means shading from winter sun and/or wind, thereby, reducing sun scald or transpiration damage, e.g. southwest injury. This windbreak, or shading, can be nothing more than snow fencing, burlap, or, after Christmas, used Christmas trees -- anything that will slow down the wind and, thereby, reduce transpiration loss to the foliage. One must remember, the root system is still frozen. Further, those bright, clear sunny days of winter can often result in sun scald and/or frost cracking. Therefore, shading protection against these is extremely important.

Mulch is the landscape's blanket or insulation. It reduces temperature fluctuation and, therefore, holds the soil frozen later in the spring while reduc-

ing temperature fluctuation during winter, thus fewer "false starts" during early spring. Further, it keeps the plants from being heaved out of the soil. The mulch to be applied can be compost, straw, wood chips, or any organic matter that modifies climatic extremes. Further, it is better to use something that can be left on the beds or worked in, becoming part of the soil- organic matter. This practice modifies winter temperatures, conserves moisture and helps reduce weed competition.

Late fall feeding

Late fall turf fertilization in the northeast is becoming a more current practice. This practice gives one the opportunity to apply fertilizer during a slower maintenance period rather than the busy spring. Further, it places the fertilizer in a position to be utilized early in the spring. Results at Ohio and Michigan State universities have shown that on heavy soils, fall fertilizer can be extremely effective while encouraging early spring green-up. When considering a sandy or well-drained soil, early spring fertilization, after the frost is out of the soil but before growth starts, is still best. One should be alerted that late fall fertilizer should be applied to the soil before it freezes. If there is frost in the soil, the fertilizer will simply leach away and not be effective but when applied prior to the soil freezing, the fertilizer will literally freeze in the root zone and be ready for spring.

Dormant seeding

Dormant lawn seeding can be an effective way of having a quality lawn for early spring. The lawn is prepared in the standard method -- rototill the soil, work in the fertilizer, but not seeded in the fall until after dormancy has set in usually Nov. 1 to 15. Further, the newly seeded areas should be mulched to reduce chance of erosion and/or desiccation of seed. The advantages of dormancy-seeding include early spring germination of seed and, therefore, establishment of lawn -- even earlier than one could seed during the spring months. Further, the grass becomes established before the weeds start. It spreads the installation of that lawn into a period of the year when horticultural tasks are less demanding.

November's landscape log should include preparation for the next growing season. This preparation is highlighted by deciduous tree and shrub transplanting, winter protection, fall fertilization and dormant lawn seeding. November becomes an important landscape maintenance month. One can dictate the quality of next season's landscape at a period when the press of current landscape maintenance is reduced.

