

Priorities are a must in May

Setting priorities in May is difficult since so many different things happen at once. Some landscape managers assign crews by a specific type of work, such as insect control, disease control, weed control, and planting. Other managers prefer to assign a portion of the landscape or golf course to crews and let them handle all types of work in the area.

Less skilled seasonal labor generally starts working in May and June. Training these workers becomes an additional consideration.

Certain types of work, especially mixing and applying chemicals, require special knowledge and are not suited for seasonal workers.

The jobs which take special knowledge are irrigation maintenance, selection and use of landscape chemicals, pruning, and equipment repair. Trusting this work to unskilled labor is dangerous.

Irrigation inspection

Irrigation systems should be inspected and tested by May. Considering the cost of irrigation systems and water today, every head, valve, controller, and pump station should be working to specifications. An irrigation system is a carefully balanced, pressurized network. If one part is not performing as intended, other parts will not function as planned either. A novice can't be expected to comprehend all the complexities of an irrigation system.

Chemical considerations

Chemical selection and use is complicated to the point Federal and state laws require the person in charge be trained and tested. It's not just the chemicals that are complicated, it's also the information needed to know when and how to use them. This includes a basic knowledge of primary insects, diseases, and desirable and undesirable plants.

During the end of April and May insects emerge and begin their damage. Warm days trigger chinchbugs, billbugs, webworms, mole crickets, cutworms and various grubs. Preventative applications of turf insecticides are effective at this time. Controlling adult insects before they lay eggs reduces damage later in the season.

Several of the most catastrophic tree and shrub insects attack young foliage in May. Deciduous plant pests include spring and fall cankerworm, elm leaf beetle, honey locust pod gall, eastern tent caterpillar, tussock caterpillar, oak leaf roller, and imported willow leaf beetle. Evergreen and conifer pests active in May include black vine weevil, juniper web worm, and European pine sawfly larvae. Depending on the area, applications of tree and shrub insecticides in early May catch a number of damaging insects at one time.

Early May is an excellent time to apply postemergence herbicides to weeds that escaped preemergence controls. Weeds in their two- to three-leaf stage are most susceptible to postemergence herbicides. Dr. Robert Shearman of the University of Nebraska recommends Trimec or 2,4-DP for postemergence control of hard-to-control weeds such as yellow wood sorrel. Second applications of preemergence herbicides may be needed at this time in northern U.S. and Canada.

Preemergence herbicides should be incorporated into plant beds as you convert from bulbs to annual displays. If beds became excessively weedy in the spring, you may want to spray weeds with Roundup and wait two weeks before replanting. Another option, where practical, is soil fumigation.

Spring rains and warmer temperatures favor development of certain turf diseases. Diseases are more of a concern on specialty turf areas such as golf or bowling greens. But, normal turf areas may develop problems when disease conditions are favorable. See our upcoming Disease Control Guide in the June issue for specific diseases and their control.

Fungicide treatment may be necessary, but factors such as thatch, irrigation, drainage, shade, air flow, soil pH, and fertilization should be examined and corrected to prevent continuing trouble. Schedule necessary renovation work for late August and September.

Tree and shrub diseases abound during May. Apple scab, fireblight, and frog eye begin defacing crabapples. Anthracnose attacks susceptible cultivars of sycamore in May. In both cases, planting disease resistant *Malus* or *Platanus* varieties solves the problem. If this is impractical, fungicide applications should be made in May.

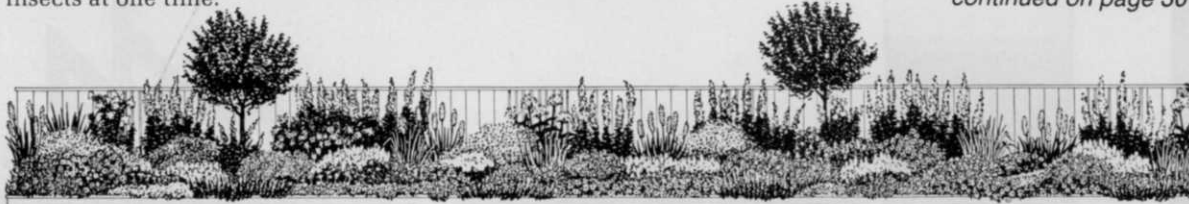
May is a good time to apply growth regulators to hard-to-mow slopes. A new use for growth regulators is annual bluegrass control in turf. 3M's Embark is now registered to discourage *Poa annua* in golf fairways by reducing seed production. Elanco's Cutless, a growth modifier currently under an experimental use permit, appears to have a number of beneficial qualities, including greener turf color.

Aquatic weed control becomes a factor as soon as water temperatures get above 65 degrees F. Lakes and ponds with bad algae reputations should be treated with copper compounds.

A second application of nitrogen to bentgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, zoysia, St. Augustine, and bermudagrass should be planned for mid- to late-May if your program uses quick-release fertilizers.

It is possible to mix compatible pesticides to

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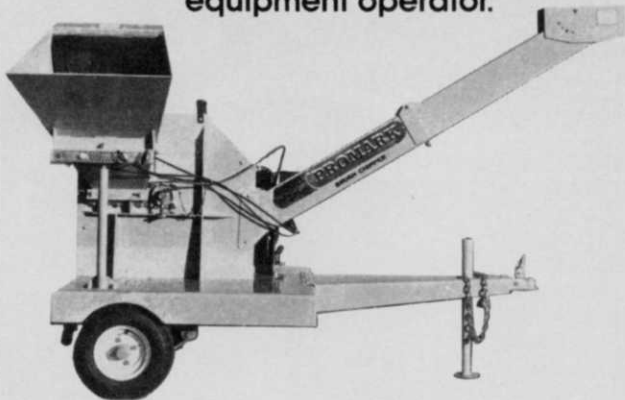


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Prune back shrubs after flowering by removing older stems instead of shearing for shape.

reduce the number of separate applications. For example, premixed combinations of ornamental insecticides and fungicides are available. Turf fertilizers and herbicides are often combined as well. Ask your chemical supplier for premixed products when available or about compatibility of the products you want to mix.

Prune after flowering

May is a good time to prune overgrown forsythia, quince and some spireas as soon after blooming as possible. Pruning these plants back later in the year or during the winter will reduce the number of flower buds. Correct pruning usually involves thinning out branches rather than shearing these plants back to shape. Rhododendrons and azaleas can be lightly pruned following flowering. Experts recommend removing seed-heads as they form after flowering.

Take notes to remind you later of changes needed in landscape design or major pruning. It's always a good idea to carry a small notebook with you to make such notes.

Set equipment priorities

To cut equipment down time, check spare part supplies and insist operators check belts, hydraulic lines, oil and filters at least twice each day. Establish priorities for jobs so equipment can be moved to high priority work in the case of breakdowns. Call your parts supplier before sending a crewmember to pick them up. It may be cheaper to pay a delivery service than take a man off a job to pick up supplies.

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