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SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO:

"Ask the Expert"
Landscape Management
7500 Old Oak Blvd.
Cleveland, OH 44130

Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear in the magazine.

Quack, quack, quack

Is there a selective herbicide that removes quackgrass and nutsedge in ornamental plantings? These aggressive weeds are giving us problems.

–OHIO

You can use Vantage herbicide to manage quackgrass. It is a selective broad-spectrum post-emergence herbicide for use on annual and perennial grassy weeds in turf and ornamentals. It has very limited use for turf; therefore, follow label specifications for best results.

Vantage does not control nutsedge. In your area, yellow nutsedge is most common. To manage this, you may use a herbicide such as Basagran. For better results, treat nutsedge plants when they are small and young.

Because of the underground bulbs produced by nutsedge, they are difficult to manage in one season. Reports indicate that it could take two to five years. Follow good cultural practices to help minimize weed problems.

Timing fall fertility

When is the best time to apply fertilizer in fall? What are the differences between a quick-release source of nitrogen such as urea, or a slow-release such as sulfur-coated urea? Will there be any problems with these products leaching into the soil or into drinking water?

–MICHIGAN

In the fall, when air temperature is below 50° F, respiration and growth in turfgrass tillers slows down. Photosynthesis continues to produce sugar, which accumulates and is translocated to the crown and roots. Roots will continue to grow until the ground freezes.

Nitrogen fertilizer applied at this time will help to prolong photosynthesis by stimulating chlorophyll production. Turfgrass remains green longer into the dormant season and greens up earlier in the spring. Root growth also is stimulated with nitrogen applied at this time.

Late-fall fertilization occurs at about the time of the last mowing and should not be confused with dormant fertilization which occurs after the leaf tissue turns brown. For fall fertilization, water soluble, quick-release sources of nitrogen—such as urea—are the preferred products. They are not temperature dependent. You can also use slow-release products such as isobutylidene diurea (IBDU) or sulfur-coated (SCU). IBDU is not temperature-dependent, while the sulfur coating in SCU is rather temperature-dependent. Natural organic fertilizers are the least-preferred for fall fertilization because they require microbial degradation, a temperature-dependent process.

The likelihood of nitrogen leaching out of a root zone of clay or other heavy soils is remote. However, nitrate leaching can occur on sandy soils although in one experiment on Long Island, NY, fertilized plots produced no more leachate than unfertilized plots. It may be advisable to use slow-release fertilizers on sandy soils until additional research provides clarification of the fate of nitrogen in different soil textures.

Where and how can we get current information and facts about pesticides used in turf and ornamental plant pest management?

–PENNSYLVANIA

Where to find info

Kathy Zahirsky, director of Environmental and Regulatory Programs at the The Davey Tree Expert Company, referenced the following sources:

—search local libraries to find reputable horticulture or green industry magazines; also look for *Agricultural Chemical News;*

—land-grant university libraries carry university extension service publications.

—manufacturers: pesticide labels and material safety data sheets (MSDS); research data; technical and/or promotional literature.

—state and federal agencies, such as EPA; state departments of agriculture; the National Pesticide Telecommunication Network (NPTN); Department of Transportation; Cooperative Extension Service;

—national/local industry associations: ALCA; PGMS; PLCAA;

—computer access: World-Wide Web (through EPA); CompuServ's Knowledge Index Program); Extoxnet, network services.

—private consulting firms.