

## Fall fertilization concerns

*We have been providing late-fall fertilization for lawns for a number of years. We have noticed an increase of snow mold disease or winter injury problems. Employees feel that the late-fall feeding could be partially responsible.*

—MICHIGAN

Your employees may be correct based on some research that late-season fertilization can reduce cold hardiness and increase the risk of winter injury and/or snow mold disease under certain situations.

However, in recent years many professional companies have been providing late-fall fertilization programs without an increase of problems.

Interest in late-season fertilization has also spread to the public because of agronomic benefits such as promoting increased root and shoot development during late winter and early spring, as well as early-spring green-up.

Winter injury and/or low temperature disease can occur if high rates (more than 2 lb. of N/1000 sq. ft.) of quick-release sources of nitrogen are used. This type of problem can be expected if the treatments are not applied at a proper time.

Reports also indicate that late-season fertilization should be made when turfgrass is still green. This could be around October and/or November in your area. Prior to this period, for example September, an application of 1 lb. of N/1000 sq.

ft. is recommended so that turf will be green during the late-fall application period. Avoid a high rate of nitrogen during September to prevent lush growth which will be susceptible to winter injury and/or snow mold disease.

If there is a history of snow mold or other low temperature basidiomycetes fungal diseases in the lawns consider using specific snow mold active fungicides.

Soon after winter, rake the matted grass blades. If the late-fall fertilization is properly applied, the spring treatments can be delayed with good agronomic benefits.

## Moss, algae, lichen on trees

*Some of our client's trees have extensive moss, algae and lichen growth. What can control this?*

—LOUISIANA

Selectively prune to improve sunlight and air movement. Applying copper-containing products, such as Tri-basic Copper Sulfate, should help manage the problem. Caution, copper-containing products can stain the surfaces they contact. Moss, algae and lichen present a problem in a moist, humid environment. It's most common in the South. Some types of moss, like Spanish moss (Ball moss), are a herbaceous perennial. Spanish moss is an epiphytic plant, capable of absorbing moisture and nutrients from the atmosphere. It does not enter the living tissue like mistletoe or other parasitic

plants. Lots of moss can reduce sunlight on trees and, indirectly affects their photosynthesis.

Other types of moss, algae and lichen also seek shelter on trees. They do not harm the trees directly. However, in many situations, their growth becomes unsightly.

## Iron's effects on turf

*Is there any real advantage in using iron on turfgrass?*

—NEW YORK

Depending on soil properties, turfgrass species and geography, there may be some advantage in using iron on turfgrass. Reports indicate that iron can improve the color and can possibly reduce the need for using high rates of nitrogen.

Unpublished reports suggest that the results obtained from iron-containing products are quite variable. Non-chelated iron products appear to be better than the chelated products. We have not seen any appreciable color difference over untreated Kentucky blue, rye and fescue mix turfgrass using several iron products on the market even after applying four times a year. Some iron sources can be phytotoxic and a few can stain non-targeted areas.

As far as your question concerning "real advantages", the best thing to do is to try different products on a small scale. Read and follow label specifications for details on rates and timing. **LM**



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