

Green Team Quarterly

Fall 2012

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Oct 9th and 10th Commercial Pesticide School and Exam. MHCREC, Mills River NC.

Oct . 22nd and 23rd, Residential Rain Garden Class, Buncombe County Extension Office

Oct. 24th and 25th, Stream Dr. Program, Henderson County Extension Office, Hendersonville, NC. Call 697-4891 for more information and to preregister.

Dec 5th 9:00-4:00 Nursery Short Course, MHCREC, Mills River.

Dec 12th Madison County Landscape Workshop, Madison County CEC, Marshall NC. Pesticide Credits applied for

Dec 13th, 9:00– 4:30 —Irrigation Workshop, MHCREC, Mills River NC, more details coming!! NCLIC Credits will be applied for

Jan. 14th-18th, Green and Growin' Trade Show and Conference, Greensboro NC. For more information contact NCNLA at <http://www.ncnla.com/contact.php> or call 919-816-9119



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Are You Ready for the Winter?

Contributing authors- Cliff Ruth and Tim Mathews

There's a bit of crisp coolness in the air and some of us have seen a little light frost. The Autumn season is definitely upon us. The question is; are we ready for winter? Since forecasting the weather is an art that will be left up to the meteorologists, we're not going to pretend to know what the weather will be at your place but we can expect some kind of bad weather this winter. We will let you decide on what that may be based on your own experience in your microclimate. While most of these tips are just reminders we felt that they may serve as guidelines for all of you in the green industry to think about as you prepare your operation for the colder season.



Tips for Greenhouses and Nurseries

Greenhouse structures should be thoroughly inspected for damage to coverings; air leaks around fans, vents, or doors; and the security/tightness of clips, springs or lathing holding the polyethylene in place. Make sure that repairs are made and any cracks sealed with foam or other insulation materials. . If you are uncertain about snow loads particularly on empty, unheated greenhouses you may want to invest in temporary bracing and have this on hand by mid November at the latest to be ready to put into place should a heavy snow even occur. Be sure to remove any shade cloth at this time. Snow is very difficult to sweep off of shade cloth and quite often these collect water in the openings that freezes and becomes quite heavy.

Heating equipment should receive a complete cleaning and any worn parts be replaced. It will be much easier to conduct preventative maintenance during the fall than waiting until something breaks during the middle of the coldest night of winter. However, even after you have made a complete inspection of your heating equipment be sure to obtain spare parts and have them on hand should a problem arise during the colder months. Heating equipment inspection should include all thermostats. Make sure that the contacts in these are clean and functional. Even the best of these can corrode and get out of calibration. Consider upgrading heating equipment if your equipment is losing efficiency. Upgrades may be expensive up front but with the cost of fuel will often pay for themselves in a short time just in fuel dollars saved.

If you are not planning to use the entire greenhouse range, consider shutting off part of it and only heat the sections that you will be growing tender ornamentals. For some of you this may mean placing partitions in some areas of the range. Just remember to make sure that these partitions do no obstruct air movement between fans and vents.

Be sure not to forget your watering systems. If you have empty unheated greenhouses be sure to drain these pipes and valves completely to prevent freezing and bursting. Even in heated structures you may want to inspect and insulated any pipes that might come in contact with colder air than that in the rest of the structure. Portions of the irrigation system that might be out doors including pump houses should checked to insure that they are completely wrapped and may need extra heat tape placed on them should temperature fall well below those normal for the area.

Nurseries that have not done so already should remove all shade cloth and began hardening off their plants by letting them dry out a little more between irrigation cycles. Hopefully, you have ceased applications of any fertilizer products by now.

If you have winter weed concerns go ahead and apply a pre-emergent herbicide to the top of containers but do not plan to cover these plants for around six weeks. Plants in overwintering houses can be jammed together now and plants moved in from surrounding pads. As we get closer to Thanksgiving plan on having the overwintering coverings ready to put on those houses. Prior to colder weather extra foam or spunbond blankets may come in handy should we get temperature in the single digits or lower.

We have a good new publications from Dr. Anthony LeBude on overwintering plants. If you have e-mail we can send it to you, otherwise please let us know and we will mail a copy.

Tips for Lawns and Landscapes



Fall can be one of the busiest times for getting those lawn and landscape activities done. Lawns should continue to be mown until active growth has stopped and the last mowing should leave the lawn at a normal mowing height of 2 ½ to 3 inches. Allowing grass to grow longer and fall over can cause fungal disease problems by trapping moisture. Another important chore is to keep fall leaves raked up off the lawn. Leaves left on the lawn for extended periods of time can cause suffocation of the plant and also lead to fungus diseases. It is possible to use a mulching mower to chop the leaves and allow them to stay on the lawn but be sure to avoid excess build up. Fall is an excellent time to fertilize lawns but wait till late October or mid-November so that plants are not pushed to produce new above ground growth. When fertilizing, be sure to adhere to soil sample recommendations. Woody landscape plants also benefit from this late season fertilization with a low nitrogen/high phosphorus product. To keep grass from creeping into landscape beds, now is the time to edge these beds. It is sufficient to slice through the ground severing roots and underground runners. It is not necessary to dig a ditch.

Mulching is another chore that is important to get the landscape ready for winter. Mulching prepares plants for winter by insulating them against rapid freezing and thawing. Avoid too much mulch on landscape beds. The appropriate amount for most all landscape plants is 2 inches. Make sure you pull the mulch away from larger trees and shrubs to keep voles and other rodents from chewing on the trunks.

While we don't often think about it, watering late into the season will help to further protect landscape plants. Depending on your location, fall and winter can be dry and if precipitation is low plants can be stressed going into the winter months. Pay particular attention to those plants under overhangs or in raised beds. Deep, infrequent watering combined with proper mulching will insure healthy plants next spring.

For more information on lawn and landscape maintenance see:

http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/Maintenance_Calendars.aspx#000017

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-604.html>

Newsletter Info

Due to county budget restrictions this newsletter will only be sent out on a quarterly basis. Information will continue to be sent to all green industry individuals on a regular, weekly basis—electronically should you wish to subscribe by e-mail.

If you have an e-mail address please send it to me at cdruth@ncsu.edu

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Recommendations for the use of chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University or

North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. For assistance, contact an agent of North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in any of these activities, please contact Cliff Ruth at 828-255-5522 during business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations at least 5 days prior to the event. Also if you need a Spanish Interpreter either for you or employees please let me know at least a week in advance so I can request one and provide them the materials.