

## Tree and Yard Care Tips

Today I want to talk a bit about tree and yard care and maintenance. As we head into summer, I usually start getting a lot of questions in this area and this year has been no different. The prolonged severe drought that we've been in has had a very negative effect on the trees and lawns in our county.

Many of the trees that I have been called to look at are showing signs of severe environmental stress from the drought. Most of these trees can be brought back and look in much better condition than they are but they do need proper care to accomplish this. Because drought is the major stressor right now, watering is an important part of that care. For newly planted trees, more frequent watering is necessary because they do not have an extensive root system developed yet. Daily watering is necessary and the water should be placed very close to the trunk of the tree. For established trees, watering is also essential but it does not need to be done as frequently or with as much water. Weekly or bi-monthly watering is usually sufficient for maintaining established trees. When watering an established tree, you want to place the water out away from the tree where the roots are. This area usually extends from the "drip line", which is where the edge of the tree branches overhang the ground to a distance about 2/3 of the height of the tree out from the trunk. A handy tool to help make sure that your water is making it to the tree roots is a root waterer. These implements are usually about 3 feet long attach to the end of a garden hose. You attach them to the hose then stick them 18-24" in the ground and so that the water can efficiently make it to the roots of the tree. Ideally, you will reposition these to different spots around the tree so that all the roots can have access to the water. Although environmental stress is the most common problem with trees, there can also be disease and pest problems so if you do have questions, please feel free to contact the Extension Office and we can schedule a time that I can come out and take a look.

This is also the time of year that many of us are starting to get serious about our lawns and so I'll share a couple of tips about caring for our most popular lawn turf, buffalo grass. Buffalo grass is a warm season grass so it will come out of dormancy around the beginning of June and grow until we get our first frost. One great thing about buffalo grass is that in drought conditions, it will just go back to dormancy if it does not have enough moisture to grow. Buffalo grass doesn't need to be watered as often as other types of grasses but it should be watered deeply and heavily when you do. Buffalo grass that is watered frequently and lightly will not develop the good root structure needed to survive long periods of dormancy. During extremely hot, dry conditions watering once a week is sufficient and in normal conditions, watering a couple of times a month will do. Fertilizing buffalo grass is also best done after it has started growing (June usually) so that is another thing to put on your to do list in the next few weeks. 0-2 lbs. of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft is recommended with 1 lbs. being about right for average conditions. Preferably do a soil test (available through the Extension Office) to help determine the phosphorus and potassium needs. If you don't want to do a soil test, keep the phosphorus levels in the fertilizer low and the potassium levels at medium levels in comparison to nitrogen to about broadleaf weed problems. Another great thing about buffalo grass is that the need for mowing is vastly reduced in comparison to many other turf grasses. When mowing, you want to mow to a height between 2.5-4" tall. Leaving it this height will help its drought resistance and better equip it to compete with any weeds. One final thing to consider with buffalo grass that was a big problem in Rawlins County 2 years ago is white grubs. White grubs develop under the turf surface and as they grow, eat away the root system of the grass. By the time that you realize that they are a problem, due to the grass turning brown, the roots are already gone and the grass is dead. Right now is a great time

to plan for a June treatment to kill these grubs with preventative pesticides. Products for preventative applications contain the systemic active ingredients; imidacloprid, chlorantraniliprole, clothianidin, thiamethoxam and halofenozide. Follow the direction on the label and remember that most of these products need to be watered in to effectively reach the grub larva. For those of you wanting to establish or fill in some spots, now through early July is the best time to seed buffalo grass, if it's going to be in a place where you can get water onto it. Once planted, buffalo grass should germinate in one to two weeks this time of year. Plan to use 1.5-2 lbs. of seed per 1,000 sq. ft. to establish turf within a year or you can use 1 lbs. of seed per 1,000 sq. ft. and have turf established within a year and a half. Buffalo grass doesn't germinate as thickly as fescue but instead relies on runners and becomes thicker each year. Opposite of what you want to do with established buffalo grass, make sure to water your new grass regularly and use frequent mowing to control weeds instead of herbicides. Seedling buffalo grass can be susceptible to herbicides. For more information about buffalo grass care and establishment or any lawn care questions, please contact the Extension Office, I will be happy to help.