

Marks Remarks by Mark Rowen Lincoln County Educator 3-14-08

With the warm weather, thoughts turn to spring and getting outside for working in the yard. It becomes important to not get in a real big hurry for setting out plants or fertilizing. We still have the potential for a hard freeze until about mid April. Especially since Easter is so early, the decision for planting should be based on the ground temperature and the potential for a killing frost.

Fertilizing lawns is not recommended as yet. Even though the air temperature is in the 40's or 50's does not indicate the time is right for fertilizing. The plant is just coming out of the winter dormancy. Fertilizing too early stimulates the plant to grow and with the possibility of a killing frost, could actually increase the winter kill of a lawn. The best time to fertilize is after the grass has come totally out of dormancy, which is usually around May 1. This gives the grass enough time to start accumulating some nutrients in the plants because it takes energy for the grass to uptake the fertilizer.

It is important to look closely at the labels of the fertilizer to know the amounts of the nutrients available. Some of the products indicate a portion of the nutrients are in the organic form or slow release. This form takes longer to become available to the plant. This is fine, if all of the nutrients are available quickly, there will be a flush of growth, and then the lawn will decline for a time. It is better if a portion is in organic or slow release so nutrients are available on a steady level.

Keep in mind, when you fertilize your lawn this also fertilizes the trees and shrubs as well. This also means if a product is used with a broadleaf weed killer, chances are it is "weeding" the trees and shrubs also. It is not recommended to use a weed and feed product on a lawn with trees and shrubs. The trees and shrubs may take in enough of the

product to cause a decline or even kill the plants. Just stick to a straight fertilizer, not the broadleaf weeding product. The crabgrass products do not harm trees or shrubs.

For more information about this or other topics contact the Lincoln County Extension office at 764-2756.