

Spring Gardening

Every spring, we eagerly anticipate the resurrection of our garden plants, expecting a show that far outperforms their last. The big question looms as to how last fall's late additions, divisions, and transplants will perform and reshape the landscape. There are a number of things we can do now to help ensure this year's show won't be disappointing.

Apply fertilizer to ornamentals now, but remember that large mature shrubs may not need any supplemental nutrition on a continuing basis. Over-fertilizing them can cause them root problems that lead to decline.

Prune and fertilize spring-blooming shrubs such as forsythia, hydrangeas, azaleas, spirea, and weigelia after they bloom. Azaleas need a yearly application of an acid-forming azalea fertilizer. They also require a lower than normal pH soil, so if your azaleas are performing poorly, log onto <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/b670-w.html> to gain some further insight into their care.

There is still time to make a late treatment of preemergence herbicide to keep annual weeds out of your lawn and landscape. You may have missed some of the crabgrass if you haven't made a previous application but all is not lost. Weed seeds germinates on a continuum but there are seasonal peaks.

The two ideal times to apply preemergence herbicides in North GA are March 1-15th and September 1-15th with follow up treatments about 6 weeks afterwards. Surflan (oryzalin), Balan (benefin), and Halts (pendimethalin) are the most common preemergence herbicides for lawns. Surflan (oryzalin), Treflan and Preen (both contain trifluralin) are the most commonly used preemergence herbicides used in landscape beds.

Remember that most preemergence herbicides work by inhibiting roots. Lawns should be well rooted and annual beds planted with plugs should be well watered to settle soil before applying these products. Preemergence herbicides work well on annual weeds like oxalis, spurge, and crabgrass but are not effective on weeds with an established root system like nutsedge, dandelion, or bermudagrass.

If predictions come true, we are in store for a warm, dry summer. Please remember to water wisely. Watering deeply (approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 inch of water) twice a week encourages a deep root system and more drought resistant plants. Also try to group your high water use plants in the same areas to cut down on watering. For the best use of your water dollar try to water in early morning before 10 a.m. Hopefully spring rains will come at regular intervals to aid our efforts. Meanwhile, having done all we can, keep your camera handy for the grand show ahead.