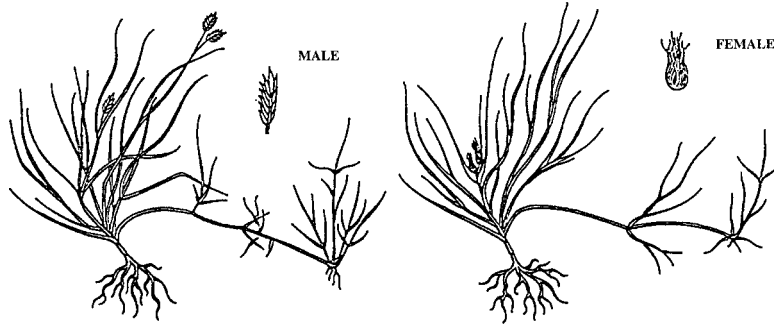


Buffalograss – The Other Green Grass

After turf becomes well established (up to four months for plugged areas; four to eight weeks for sodded areas), a reduction in management inputs can be realized.

The mowing requirement for vegetatively established buffalograss ranges from approximately every two weeks to once per year, depending on management level and aesthetic requirement. The recommended mowing height, when mowing is practiced, is 1-1/2 to 4 inches. Shorter mowing heights will require a greater mowing frequency. Avoid removing more than one-third of the turf height (i.e., for a 2-inch mowing height, mow when the turf reaches 3-inches) at any mowing. Removing clippings is optional and normally not required or recommended.

Excessive nitrogen (N) fertilization promotes weed populations in buffalograss. Exceeding the following recommendation defeats the low management concept of buffalograss and promotes weed invasion. Apply one to three pounds N per 1000 square feet per year in two applications (mid- to late-May and late-July). On sandy or low-fertility soils and/or in high rainfall areas, use the upper end of the recommended rates. Use a slow-release N carrier such as SCU, ureaformaldehyde or a natural organic fertilizer. For phospho-



rous, potassium and pH adjustments, test the soil every three to five years.

The water requirements of established buffalograss are considerably lower than the commonly used turfgrasses. Excessive irrigation, much like overfertilization, promotes weed invasion. Irrigating buffalograss in many areas is not required. If natural precipitation is inadequate or untimely, supplemental irrigation may be required.

Once established and properly managed, weed pressure in buffalograss is minimal. If herbicides are required, follow label directions explicitly to maximize weed control. Ronstar G, Dimension, Dacthal, and Surfian are pre-emergence products currently labeled for use in buffalograss. Except for Dacthal their use is restricted to certified applicators. A spring application for control of summer annual weeds, such as crabgrass, goosegrass and spurge, should be applied when soil temperatures reaches 50°F.

A second pre-emergence application in late summer or early fall will control winter annuals, such as henbit, chickweed and annual bluegrass.

Post-emergence control of annual grasses is best achieved with arsenical compounds (DSMA, MSMA). Broadleaf products cleared for use in buffalograss include a number of 2,4-D containing products. Do not apply products containing 2,4-D if temperatures are expected to exceed 80°F on the day of application. Dormant buffalograss can be sprayed with Round-Up to control winter weeds. Fall applications can be applied after the first frost or when the buffalograss turns straw-brown.

Spring applications of Round-Up should not be applied to buffalograss if the dormant turf is showing any green color. Round-Up applications applied to semi-dormant buffalograss will significantly delay green-up and could severely injure the buffalograss. (DJ)

Urban Agriculture



Careful Spraying is a Key to Preventing Foliage Damage

It's that time of year again to start spraying for weeds. It's also the time of year to exercise caution with chemical herbicides.

Just as chemical herbicides have the power to kill "weed" plants, they also have the power to kill many other plants. Some of these other plants, such as trees and shrubs in field windbreaks and farmstead shelterbelts and flowers and shade trees in yards, are quite valuable.

Science has yet to compound chemicals that can think for themselves. Therefore, the spray will go wherever it is aimed or wherever the wind carries it, and not always where we would like it. Only individuals have the power to direct and control spraying.

It is only natural that indiscriminate or careless spraying practices will cause damage to plants the herbicide was not intended for.

Trees are quite vulnerable to

weed sprays. Herbicides carried by the wind cause dieback of foliage and, in many cases, eventual death of the tree. Even though repeated applications do not seem to do much damage as the trees seem to be alright later in the summer, the tree's health and vigor is seriously weakened. Trees in such weakened condition are easy prey for potentially harmful insects and diseases which could kill the tree.

To avoid the dangers of drift, exercise judgment when spraying. Do not make field applications where wind velocity exceeds eight mph. Wind will cause poor coverage and excessive drift. Do not use 2-4D ester, Dicamba or similar herbicides near vegetables, ornamentals trees, shrubs or broadleaf crops. Be sure to calibrate application equipment.

Remember, chemical herbicides are wonderful, work-saving weed killers but take precautions for their safe and intended use. (DJ)

Squirrels Cause Spring Frustration

Squirrels seem to do most of their twig-clipping and bark-stripping in the spring, leaving tree owners frustrated.

Squirrels can cause a number of chronic, low-level problems but there are ways to keep squirrels at bay.

Twig-clipping occurs when squirrels clip the ends of tree branches. Squirrels may do this as a territorial marking or because of their rodent tendency to chew. Twig-clipping doesn't have much impact on trees. However, the small twigs covering the ground can be annoying to tree owners.

Bark-stripping can be more problematic because the squirrels may kill the branch they've stripped. Squirrels feed on cambium, the inner bark of the tree, which is nutritious for them. Most trees can handle up to a third defoliation and are usually able to survive bark-stripping, but in rare cases, the

tree may be severely damaged.

Bark-stripping tends to occur more often in cities than rural areas, possibly because squirrels have limited nutrient resources in the city and may have to forage more.

Any tree is susceptible to bark-stripping, but it's seen most often in broad-leaved trees.

Squirrels can cause a number of other problems, some just annoying and some quite costly. Squirrels may get into homes' attics to birth their young or they may eat the feed in bird feeders and scare the birds away. They also can crawl into a vehicle's engine compartment and chew the wires or climb along power lines and blow out power transformers. Repairs for this are extremely costly.

Squirrel repellants are an option in some circumstances but are not effective in deterring bark-stripping. Capsaicin, the

active ingredient in hot sauce, is a registered repellent and polybutene is a sticky tactile repellent.

Live-trapping is an option if the problems come from a few persistent squirrels. Permits are required to do this and may be obtained from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission or a local animal control office. Trapped squirrels should be released in a vacant habitat—a wooded area that doesn't have many other squirrels. Resident squirrels are very territorial and transplants may not survive.

Despite the problems squirrels may cause, they are essential in the web of life and provide several benefits. They add to habitat diversity and are important prey for owls, coyotes and other predators. Squirrels also contribute to tree re-establishment by burying nuts and leaving some behind to grow. (DJ)

Weed Control Essential for New Seedlings

Newly planted windbreaks, trees and shrubs need weed protection throughout the summer, especially within the first year of planting. New trees and shrubs that have to compete with aggressive weeds and grasses for moisture, light and nutrients, may suffer from stunted growth or die in the process.

Cultivation, mowing and chemical herbicides can help control weeds. Newly germinated weeds can be killed easily by cultivation or chemicals just

before or after the seedling stage.

To ensure treatment will be effective, cultivate or spray vegetation two feet on each side of tree rows or within a four-foot radius of each seedling. If applied in the proper amount and just after trees and shrubs are planted, pre-emergent herbicides such as Simazine will control most weeds for the growing season.

Cultivation is the best method to control weeds and retain moisture for seedlings as

long as it's not too deep or soil is pushed against the trees. Mowing weeds and grass between rows is another way to control weeds and the remaining vegetation prevents soil erosion.

New trees need extra attention for up to three years after planting. Some property owners plant bromegrass or other grasses between windbreak rows after the first year. These grasses smother weeds but also compete with trees for moisture and nutrients. (DJ)

Weather & Climate Information on the Web

Have you found Lancaster County Extension's weather page on the web? Weather is an integral part of the Nebraska Production Agriculture web pages, found within Lancaster County Extension's Ag/Acreage section.

This page provides links to color-coded maps showing: current drought information, one and seven day average soil temperatures, one and seven day potential evapo-transpiration and links to current radar images of precipitation, maps showing rainfall amounts for the past day and many more items of interest.

If you would like to view charts of the weather conditions for each day of any month since January 1999 for Lincoln, the information is just a click away. Detailed daily information includes: maximum, minimum and average temperature, normal maximum, minimum and average temperatures, record highs and lows, rainfall amounts and heating-degree day/cooling-degree day values. Less detailed daily weather information can be found for previous years. This historical information includes: maximum and

minimum temperatures and precipitation for every day back to 1920.

Perhaps you are looking for extension publications covering weather and climate. Links are provided to NebGuides on cropping practices and decisions based on probability of freezes and other weather factors, reducing or mitigating heat stress in animals and why Nebraskans should be concerned about global warming.

The weather page can be accessed by pointing your web browser to lancaster.unl.edu/ag then clicking on the Weather button under Nebraska Production Agriculture icon or point your browser to: <http://lancaster.unl.edu/ag/weather/weather.htm> (TD)

