

Spring is Closer Than You Think

With the ice we saw last week, it was a little hard to think about flowers and gardens and lawns. The calendar doesn't stop for a few cold days, however, and that means that those early spring activities will be upon us before we know it.

For our cool season (Kentucky bluegrass or tall fescue) turf grasses, March is the month when weeds start to pop up. Spot treat as necessary on a day that is 50 degrees or warmer. Watch the forecast, since a moisture event within 24 hours of application will reduce effectiveness. April is actually our typical window for crabgrass preventer applications. That means March is when we need to make sure we have our product, our treated area dimensions, and our application equipment in order so we're ready to apply.

Spring-flowering bulbs are best fertilized when they emerge – not at flowering. That means watching during March when foliage first pokes through the ground, and applying fertilizer then. Apply according to soil test results when at all possible.

Don't have a soil test? March is a great time for soil testing flower beds, gardens, and lawns. Collect a representative sample from the surface to a depth of six to eight inches from eight to ten spots in the area to be fertilized. Mix the samples together and submit one pint of soil for testing. Remember: a soil test will tell you if nutrient deficiencies are contributing to poor growth. They will not tell you if you have compaction, disease, or competition issues.

For fruit growers, March is the time to plan fungicide applications for disease control (not to mention the pruning we talked about last week...). For example, peach growers that have had peach leaf curl need to be prepared for early applications of fungicides for its control. Fungicides are ineffective if applied after buds begin to swell in the spring.

Time is shorter than you think. It may be time to start your spring to-do.