



Pest Corner

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Adapted by Cecilia from articles by Don Tapio, G.H. Co. Extension Agent.

Fall is an ideal time for transplanting

Plants can take advantage of the cool and moist air while soil temperature is still warm. Fall transplanting will not make plants more sensitive to freezing during winter temperatures, as compared with those that are planted in the spring. During fall, plants are entering a period of dormancy as they stop the transfer of energy into new foliage and aboveground growth. Instead, plants transfer energy into their roots to store nutrients for the cool months ahead. Fall transplanting allows plants time to develop a well-established root system by next spring, enabling them to handle summer weather.

Insects in firewood

Insects in firewood brought inside the house are of no real danger to humans, homes, or furniture. These insects spend winters under the bark of wood in the pile. When wood is brought inside, the insects crawl out because it is warmer. Manually remove the insects. **WSU entomologists strongly advise against treating firewood. Insecticides will not penetrate deeply enough to control the insects. Storing and burning insecticide-treated firewood indoors is a health hazard if pesticide is vaporized into the living area.** Best prevention is to leave the firewood outside until needed. Bring indoors a small supply as needed. Insects in firewood require several days to warm up indoors before they become active.

To prevent carpenter ants and termites from entering the house, (or its wood structures), do not stack firewood against the outside walls. Wood that remains moist may attract carpenter ants. These do not feed on the wood, but they hollow out smooth galleries in the wood for nesting. Wood stacked directly on the ground may have termites. Mud tunnels may be seen on the outside of the wood, or there may be mud-lined galleries within the log. The main termite nest containing the queen is in the soil, but the workers will tunnel into the firewood and feed upon it. Termites brought inside cannot establish a new nest, and will not damage the house or furniture. However, woodpiles stacked against the house can provide a way for termites to extend their feeding into the house. Best prevention is to stack firewood off the ground. If you find a termite infestation in firewood stacked next to the house, consult a pest management professional.

Mushrooms

Mushrooms (“toadstools”) are the spore-producing structures of Fungi. Most are beneficial as they break down organic matter and release nutrients. In cool and wet weather, mushrooms often pop up in lawns almost overnight. The fungi that produce the mushrooms are harmless to grasses and landscape plants. Mushrooms produce spores (tiny seed-like). Spores germinate and send out long threadlike growths called hyphae. Hyphae decompose wood, fallen leaves, lawn thatch and other organic matter. A single strand of hyphae is only visible with a magnifying glass. Hyphae may grow together in the soil to form masses called mycelium. When the mycelium develops, mushrooms are produced. The mushroom-producing fungi can live in the soil for years and produce mushrooms whenever the weather is favorable.

There are no chemicals (fungicides) that are effective in controlling mushroom-producing fungi. If the mushrooms are coming from dead roots, dig the roots up. If needed, de-thatching in the fall is the best solution to remove the fungi’s food source. Simply removing the mushrooms will not kill the mycelium from which the mushrooms grow. "Fairy rings" in lawns are caused by certain fungi, which may, or may not, produce mushrooms. If the soil in the ring becomes matted by the mycelium and water cannot move through, aerate the soil in the ring, then water deeply. This should improve turf grass root growth and eliminate, or reduce, the effects of the fungus.

Do not eat any wild mushroom unless you are sure it is safe to eat. Do not rely on "simple" tests to distinguish edibles from poisonous types. At times, it is quite difficult to identify mushrooms safe to eat...even to experts.

Lime and moss growth in turfgrass

Four times a year, apply 5 pounds of Ammonium Sulfate per 1000 square feet of lawn. Make a final application at the end of November.

Applying lime to the lawn now allows for winter rains to dissolve the lime and carry it into the root zone of the grass. However, it will do very little, if anything, to prevent moss from growing during winter.