

## **Don't Take a Vacation from Lawn Care Just Yet**

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As the days of summer wind down, you might be thinking about a long rest from lawn care. But don't take that vacation just yet, or if you do, make it a short one, because fall is a good time to take care of weeds, remove leaves, and fertilize grass to ensure a fuller, greener lawn next spring.

Fall is the best time of the year to control such broadleaf weeds as dandelion, plantain, chickweed, henbit, and clover. These weeds are actively growing in the fall, making them easier to control. And since grass also is actively growing during this time, it will fill in spaces the weeds formerly occupied.

Another reason to use fall broadleaf weed control is that winds usually are calmer this time of year so there is less chance of herbicide drift. Also, there are fewer sensitive plants in the yard that might be injured by drift or herbicide volatility.

You shouldn't depend on frost for weed control because it only stunts or kills the tops, not the crowns and roots.

It's important to remove leaves because they shade grass and this prevents the growth of new grass plants. Although you can chop leaves with a lawnmower, it's best to remove them because accumulation of chopped leaves hurts new grass plant and stem development. Rather than send the leaves you've removed to the landfill, add them to your compost pile.

Fall is also a great time to mow and fertilize your lawn, since most of our grasses are still putting food into reserves and expanding root systems before cold weather.

Continue to mow the lawn as long as the grass grows. Mow it shorter in the fall because grass should be no more than two inches tall going into the winter. Grass that's too tall often flops over and smothers itself out, causing you to lose up to one-half the grass density.

Mowing grass shorter and fertilizing it in the fall produces a more lush lawn. The short grass allows more light to penetrate. This, plus a high-nitrogen fertilizer, produces new grass plants that thicken your lawn. It also will produce earlier growth and green up next spring.

To increase lawn density without excessive top growth, apply a high-nitrogen fertilizer, making two applications six to eight weeks apart before the end of December.

Apply the fertilizer at the rate of one and one-half pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. The percentage nitrogen is the first number in the analysis on the fertilizer bag. So, when using ammonium nitrate (33-0-0) you'd apply four and one half pounds

per 1,000 square feet because three pounds of 33 percent nitrogen is the equivalent of one pound of actual nitrogen. With a 10-10-10 fertilizer, you'd apply 15 pounds per 1,000 square feet.

For more information about other lawn care activities for the fall, contact the Barren County Cooperative Extension Service at 651-3818 or [kristin.goodin@uky.edu](mailto:kristin.goodin@uky.edu). We have several publications on home lawn care.

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