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Reflecting the other day about how my job has changed through the years. Not just the office equipment or the reliance on computers, that story makes me feel prehistoric! Can you believe when I first started working, we didn't have copy machines? We sort of burnt it on some onion skin paper, wowsa!

Nowadays, people want information immediately. We are such an impatient society. With all the technology, you would think calling people, you can immediate contact, but it is still a challenge.

Big meetings and events are also becoming harder to pull off, people are just too busy these days!

Trying to find all the magic ingredients to make that work, seems to be a mystery.

I was able to take in a tour in Shawnee county about the invasive Old World Bluestem grasses. They had an amazing showing of people interested in finding out more about Caucasian Bluestem. The Yellow Bluestem, seems to only be in western Kansas. The other troublesome grasses are Broomsedge Bluestem and Silver Bluestem.

Cattle will eat the Caucasian Bluestem when it is young and in the vegetative state. Once it starts heading out, then cattle will not eat it and it gets rank. Patches of the grass are lighter green in color, as it gets rank then it falls down and gets matted.

We viewed a road ditch that is a solid stand, they are researching at Ft Hays what the allopathic properties this grass has. This response will only let it spread and won't allow other plants to compete.

They believe this grass has spread, by bringing in mulch hay from other areas to use in ditches. Broomsedge Bluestem is quite prevalent in Meadowlark District, it has a distinguishing orangish brown color in the fall. Most accounts of treatment are to take a soil test and apply the recommended amounts of phosphorus. One producer reported after two years of additional phosphorus, he eliminated the Broomsedge Bluestem in his hay field.

Silver bluestem is used primarily for grazing. Cattle graze it a few weeks in the spring, but little after the seed heads form. It can be grazed some during the winter if livestock are fed a protein supplement. Goats relish the seed heads when seed is in the dough stage. This grass is usually not seeded nor managed to control erosion on critical areas, but established itself readily on denuded soils and overgrazed ranges.

David G. Hallauer
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Turfgrass Dormancy

With any luck, you've caught one showers that have been so spotty over the region during the last few weeks. If you did, you may have a little bit of green in your lawn. If you haven't, that turfgrass may be suffering.

When heat/drought stress sticks around for awhile, it's easy to begin to wonder if the turf is still alive. Fortunately, our cool season turf grasses can handle some stress periods by going into dormancy. Unfortunately, they can't do so indefinitely. In fact, a healthy stand can, at best, tolerate dormancy for about five weeks and still recover (struggling stands will likely be less tolerant of extended dormancy periods). Go beyond the five-week mark and even the crown can get dehydrated. At that point, crown death, and thus plant death, occurs.

Let's complicate the dormancy discussion even more. Lawns that received abundant rainfall this spring or those that were overwatered may have produced a somewhat limited root system. In these cases, unless that lawn is allowed to enter dormancy slowly, it, too, can suffer and die. If the lawn you are dealing with is one of these, allow the turf to enter dormancy slowly. Instead of watering every other day, water weekly. Then again after two weeks.

Once the turf has been in dormancy for that four to five-week period, it's time to get some water back on it. Do so by applying about 1/4 inch of water every two weeks to hydrate the crown. This will be enough to hydrate the crown but not enough to encourage weed germination and growth.

Remember: the turf can go too long in dormancy and experience issues as well. To determine if it is still alive, pull up a plant and separate the leaves from the crown (the area between the leaves and the roots). If the crown is firm and not papery and dry, the plant is still alive and should emerge from dormancy when rains and cooler weather return.

Emergence from dormancy doesn't mean all is back to normal. Turf in dormancy means less canopy that can provide shade to keep weed seeds from sprouting. After heat/drought stress conditions subside, we'll likely see a flush of weeds that germinate and grow before the turfgrass catches back up.

Sidebar: How Much to Water a Lawn

There isn't an easy answer when trying to answer the question: how much water do I need? It's actually better to experiment a little.

Since we want water to get to an eight-inch depth, use a metal rod or wooden dowel or long screwdriver to push in to the soil. It will tend to stop when it hits dry soil. Once you know that depth, water for 15 minutes and recheck. By knowing how much further water has penetrated, you can then determine how long you need to run water to replenish the profile. If water runs off before you get eight inches of water in the profile, spread out watering to allow it to soak in over a longer period.

How often should we water. During most of the growing season, once per week will be adequate. During extreme heat or on heavy soils where runoff occurs quickly, twice a week may be needed.

Cindy S. Williams
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Tips for Lower Cooling Costs

As summer starts to heat up and temperatures rise, many of us are cranking up the air conditioners to stay cool. It should come as no surprise then that air conditioners use about five percent of all the electricity produced in the U. S., costing homeowners more than \$29 billion a year in energy costs.

This summer, instead of blasting the air conditioner (and blowing electricity bills through the roof), you can take simple actions that will help you beat the heat. For example, replacing a dirty, clogged air filter with a clean one can lower your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5-15 percent, while using a ceiling fan will allow you to raise the thermostat setting about four degrees without impacting your comfort.

If you're looking to save on cooling costs with your current air conditioner, our tips have you covered.

*Install and set a programmable thermostat—it could save you up to 10 percent on heating and cooling.

*Insulate your attic.

*Insulate and seal ducts—air loss accounts for about 30 percent of a cooling systems energy consumption.

*Consider grilling on a hot day instead of heating your house up with the range.

*Install energy efficient windows and window coverings.

*Use bathroom fan or range hood to remove heat and humidity in your home.

With just a few small changes, you can relax in comfort this summer while saving some cold, hard cash.

July, 13, 2018

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

No News from Nancy