**Weekly Express-News Article**

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**For The Fall Landscape**

Many San Antonio area residents are assessing their lawn situation. Even if there is damage this may be the year to be conservative and resist the urge to launch a major lawn sodding project. We are still in drought restrictions with some indication that the drought may continue.

Instead of resodding everything, consider aerating and adding some compost as top dressing. It is surprising how quickly a drought affected lawn will fill in and recover if it receives cool weather, and a reasonable amount of rainfall or irrigation.

It is too late to seed Bermuda grass or buffalo grass. They require hot weather to germinate and develop.

It is not recommended that rye or fescue be over-seeded on a permanent St. Augustine, Bermuda, zoysia, or buffalo lawn but it can be seeded to provide an emergency winter cover over bare ground where there is a danger of erosion or where mud can be a problem.

Dog runs may be such an area where some emergency sodding is called for despite the potential for drought. Unlike seeded grass, sod provides some instant cover.

There is still time to apply a winterizer fertilizer to a lawn that made it through the summer drought in fairly good shape. As long as your lawn is still green it will be able to uptake winterizer fertilizer and benefit with increased winter cold tolerance and with a faster green-up in spring. If your lawn declined this summer due to the extreme drought conditions, it may be the year to fertilize with an organic fertilizer. They only offer 4 to 6 percent nitrogen (first number) and it is all in a slow release form. It takes an active growing lawn to take advantage of the high nitrogen fast release form provided in the winterizer formulas such as 18-6-12.

The summer weeds are attempting to produce seed for next year’s crop. Keep them mowed down. They are on their last legs with the cool weather and will soon disappear.

Even if it is not the best year to be planting a new lawn, there is some planting that is reasonable. November is probably the best month of the year to plant trees and shrubs. The roots have a chance to develop before the summer heat puts the plant to the test. City Public Service is also offering its $50 rebate for selected tree species if they are planted to shade the house and reduce air conditioning needs. All of the most desirable shade trees are on the list including live oak, Mexican white oak, cedar elm, Mexican sycamore, anaqua, chinquapin oak, bur oak, Texas red oak, and shumard oak. If you buy a shumard oak it must have been grown from a alkaline soil seed source if it is going to survive in our soil.

Visit the City Public Service website at [www.cpsenergy.com](http://www.cpsenergy.com) for more information on the rebate. Many of the neighborhood nurseries also have the application and instructions.

I have always recommended that trees be fertilized in the spring but available research indicates it may be just as valuable to provide the nutrients in the fall. If you choose to fertilize trees now apply one cup of winterizer fertilizer for every inch of diameter, spread it over the drip line. Spread it as thin as possible so the lawn in that area does not become overwhelmed.

Place wildflower seed on the soil surface now for spring flowers. The site needs to have some bare soil so that the seed can make contact with the soil. Purchase seed from your favorite nursery or go online to [www.wildseedfarms.com](http://www.wildseedfarms.com) or one of the other online sources. They ship high quality seed quickly. The website is also a great source of information on the large number of wildflowers that are available.

A few geraniums and/or mums can make a colorful addition to the fall landscape. They like cool weather. Protect geraniums from freezing temperatures but garden mums can be planted in the landscape.

Mums are especially useful for a mass of color for a holiday party. Select from varieties of yellow, lavender, white, and rust. After the event plant them in full sun for more blooms every spring and fall.

In your vegetable garden keep the tomatoes and greens well fertilized. Irrigation demands should be less now but don’t let them dry out. A drip or hand application of water twice per week may do the job.

You can still plant carrots, radishes, beets, lettuce, English peas, turnips and rutabagas by seed. Broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, spinach, and cauliflower are available as transplants.