**Calvin Finch Ph.D.**

**Horticulturist and Director**

**Texas A&M Water Conservation and Technology Center**

**“August Lawn Care”**

Water is the key ingredient for lawn care in August, but there are important tasks to consider.

Most San Antonio area communities are under once-per-week watering restrictions, and some are limiting sprinkler irrigation to once every two weeks. When temperatures are near 100 degrees every day, the grass prefers irrigation once per week, but it survives fine when watered every two weeks, especially if you have at least 6 inches of soil. The lawn may not look as green as it does when temperatures are more moderate, but it will survive.

It is important that your irrigation system is operating as efficiently as possible. Call in your irrigation contractor at the first sign of leaks or other malfunctions. At least once a year, the system needs to have a complete check-up.

It is unusual for an irrigation system to apply water uniformly, and every lawn has slopes, compacted areas and hot spots where dry areas are likely to appear when temperatures are hot. One of the best tactics for dealing with the dry areas is to supplement the sprinkler application with hand watering. Hold the hose in and apply extra water to the problem dry areas.

One option that exists with Bermudas, Zoysia or Buffalo grass lawns is to discontinue irrigation for the rest of the summer and let the grass go dormant. The lawn will green up again when the temperature cools and fall rains begin.

If hand watering dry spots in the lawn does not green them up, it probably means that the browning is caused by chinch bugs. The tiny pests suck the juices from the grass leaves in the hottest part of the lawn. It will take some time for the damage to heal, but the application of a granular soil insecticide will kill the chinch bugs.

If the splotches of brown are in the cooler parts of the lawn, the damage may be caused by grubs. It is too late to control the grubs this year, but make a note on your lawn care calendar to apply the soil insecticide next June.

I know it is difficult to think about winter weeds when it is close to 100 degrees outside, but it is time to apply the pre-emergent herbicide to prevent weeds this winter. For the grasses, apply Amaze or XL. For broadleaf weeds such as thistle, bedstraw and dandelions, apply a product such as Portrait later in the fall.

For the summer weeds, you can apply a contact herbicide such as Weed be Gone or another 2-4 D product, but regular mowing can also be very effective. Mow the lawn grass at its recommended height every week and the lawn grass will usually dominate the weeds.

Mow Bermuda grass as low as possible, not any higher than 1.5 inches tall. Zoysia does well at 2 inches. Mow St. Augustine at 3.5 inches and Buffalo grass at 5 inches.

For new lawns, sod can be applied year round, but August is the last month before winter to plant Bermuda or Buffalo grass seed. For these two hot weather grasses to germinate and develop, the soil and air temperatures must be relatively high.

For detailed information on seeding Bermuda grass, search for the articles that I have written on that topic at [plantanswers.com](http://www.plantanswers.com).

**“Garden Tasks”**

Dry looking areas in the hottest part of the lawn could be caused by drying out due to shallow soil. If hand watering doesn’t correct it, treat for chinch bugs with a soil insecticide.

If the soil levels in your raised beds have fallen, refill them with compost. The organic material decomposes as time passes.

Deadheading the esperanza, poinciana and low-growing crepe myrtles encourages a longer bloom period. Remove spent flowers and/or seed pods.

The soil moisture situation has improved. Conserve the high levels of moisture by renewing mulch in shrub borders and perennial beds.