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Campbell Vaughn: Now is the time to start pruning and consider overseeding your lawns

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We have been a little slower in the office these past couple of weeks. I am assuming that now that football is back on TV, the focus has shifted to more sports and less landscapes.

Usually this time a year I feel like my columns are beating a dead horse because I have to repeat some of the stuff I have said in previous year's writing. I like to be as original as I can be, but a lot of the things I need to remind folks of seem to roll right back around every year. Who would imagine that most stuff in the landscapes repeat every year?

A perennial question I get is when to prune mophead hydrangeas. My preference would be for you to have cut them back a month ago, but it was so hot this time last month I didn't even like to look out the window at the heat much less go out into it to prune plants.

There is still time to prune these type hydrangeas, but do it soon. Definitely don't cut oakleaf hydrangea back since they are earlier to flower in the spring. I actually don't like cutting them back at all if you can handle the size of the oakleaves.

Azaleas, gardenias and camellias have set their buds for upcoming spring and early summer blooms, so be careful not to cut off the parts that make them so spectacular in the coming months. I saw a sasanqua camellia in full bloom already this week and it was gorgeous.

As for other evergreen plants that have insignificant flowers, you can prune some now, but avoid heavy pruning on plants like boxwoods and pittosporum much later than now because when they do get a good flush; the tender new leaves are susceptible to damage from a hard freeze.

It is definitely time to get those preemergence products out to keep the winter poa annua and henbit in check. If you can, get one with 0-0-7 fertilizer. The 7% potassium is good for root

health. Make sure not to use a preemergent herbicide if you are planning on overseeding with rye grass.

I am not a huge fan of overseeding unless you have a ball field or a grazing pasture, but some folks prefer a nice green winter lawn which can be really nice. Rye grass does add green to your landscape in the winter, but it competes too much with your established turf's long-term health to justify doing it every year. It also means you will be mowing at least once a week throughout the cold season. One point that is important to remember is that bermuda grass is the only one of our warm season grasses that is acceptable for overseeding.

Campbell Vaughn: Poor Max felt the sting of a venomous insect called a puss caterpillar

If you do decide to overseed, now is the time to get your lawn prepared. Mow the bermuda lower than normal over the next two cuttings. Bag your clipping and never cut off more than one-third of the grass blade. Now until mid-October is when you want to actually apply the seed. It is important that the rye seed makes contact with the soil, so blow or vacuum the excess grass and leaf matter before seeding.

Perennial rye is preferred over an annual variety. Perennial rye is treated like an annual, but it has better turf properties including good wear tolerance, quicker germination and a more consistent darker green color. Perennial rye may cost a little more, but it is worth the few extra dollars. Use a rate of 8-10 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet. Make sure to keep the soil moist until the seed is completely germinated even if this means watering lightly once or even twice daily. Wait until mid to late November when the bermuda has gone dormant to fertilize. Using 2-3 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet is all the fertilizer you will need.

Fall is coming soon and I am ready for some cooler weather. And maybe a fire in the fireplace.