

Spiff up lawns after a tough summer

Lawns languish in the heat of summer unless showered with the water they require to thrive. But not to worry, the grass isn't dead.

Come fall when the rains start again, grass greens up quickly, said Alec Kowalewski, turf specialist for Oregon State University's Extension Service.

While letting your lawn go dormant in summer isn't a bad thing — especially with concern about water shortages — lack of irrigation does allow pesky weeds to gain a foothold, he said. And regular wear and tear can cause compaction within a lawn, which leads to brown or bare spots.

Now is a good time to whip your lawn back into shape, but starting over usually isn't necessary.

"You should always try renovation before putting in a new lawn because it's difficult to get a stand of grass established," Kowalewski said. "So if you have something to begin with, go with renovating."

What you have to begin with can vary from addressing a few brown spots to a desert of weeds to hardpan soil. Assess your lawn's level of neediness and then proceed with a regular renovation or a no-holds-barred one. Most often, a regular tune up is all that's needed.

Once you've got your lawn established, follow Kowalewski's three steps to a healthy lawn that will out-compete those pesky weeds: water, fertilize and mow properly.

Watering is a matter of 1 inch a week, but don't do it all at once.

"If you look at the roots, the majority are in the top 1 inch of the soil," he said. "The deeper you go the fewer roots there are so watering more than a quarter



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inch at a time is a waste. So irrigate more frequently with less amounts when it's not raining."

Fertilize four times a year. An easy way to remember is to apply on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day and Thanksgiving.

When it comes to mowing, never remove more than one-third of the grass at one time. That means if the lawn is 3 inches long, cut only 1 inch. Cutting more than one-third weakens the lawn, leaving it vulnerable to weeds and diseases. For most grasses, 2 inches is about top range of what a homeowner will tolerate, but higher is even better.

"Increase the height of the grass as tall as you can stand it and mow once a week," he said. "If you mow it to an inch, it's horrible to the health of the plant because you're decreasing rooting depth and stress tolerance. And you'll have to water more often."

Mow once a week in spring and fall, less often during summer and winter months. Instead of bagging up clippings, consider leaving them where they fall. They break down quickly and resupply much-needed nitrogen. The more often you mow, the easier this is to do. Don't, however, leave clumps of clippings sitting on the lawn.

For more information, watch Kowalewski's video Integrated Pest Management for Turfgrass at <http://horticulture.oregon-state.edu/group/beaverturf>. Or check out the following



PHOTO FROM FLICKR, BY HEIPEI/Itemizer-Observer

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publications: Practical Lawn Establishment and Renovation, Practical Lawn Care for Western Oregon, Retail Lawn Seed Mixtures for Western Oregon and Western Washington and Fertilizing Lawns.

Steps for Renovating Lawn

For regular renovation:

- Do a pH test. Either take a sample with help from Extension's Guide to Collecting Soil Samples for Farms and Gardens and send it to a soil lab, or buy a test kit at the nursery. Lawns grow well in a pH of 6 to 6.5.
- Remove weeds by hand or with a broad spectrum herbicide.
- Aerate lawn with a machine available at rental shops. Pay particular attention to bare spots or compacted areas. Rake off plugs of soil removed by aerator.
- If the pH is on the low side (below 6.0), add lime. It's common in western Oregon for lawns to need lime every two to three years.
- Fertilize with a product that has plenty of nitrogen, low or no phosphorus and a medium level of potassium. Check the fertilizer label and

choose something with a high first number (N), low second number (P) and medium third number (K) such as 20-2-6. You'll get best results using a rotary spreader.

- Overseed at the recommended rate, going a little thicker on really bare spots. Use a drop seeder for even distribution.
- Water daily unless it rains.

For major renovation, do the above steps and also do the following:

- Mow lawn as short as possible before getting started.
- Before aerating, dethatch the lawn with a dethatching machine or power rake, which you can rent. The idea is to expose as much soil as possible. Run the machine across the lawn twice, in opposite directions. Remove loosened thatch before changing direction.
- After seeding, mulch with a thin layer of sawdust, bark dust or compost. A quarter inch is enough; don't overdo it or seed will have a tough time germinating. To make the job easier, rent a wire drum roller.

BIRTHS

Ross

Isla Kalena Ross was born to Brian and Malia Ross, of Monmouth, at 7:53 a.m. on Aug. 18 at Salem Hospital Family Birth Center.

She weighed 10 pounds, 5 ounces, and was 20.5 inches long.

Isla joins Kailani, 3.

Grandparents are Carole Mills, of Los Alamitos, Calif.; Kathy Mills, of Long Beach, Calif.; and Mike and Karen Ross, of Monmouth.

Great-grandparents are K. and Carol Baker, of Ankeny, Iowa; Walter and Jean Brubaker, of Brookings; Walter and Poppy Seastrom, of South Pasadena, Calif.; Wally and MaryLynn Ross, of Camdenton, Missouri.

Arciniega

Elias Christian Arciniega was born to Ricardo and Anita Arciniega, of Independence, at 6:04 a.m. on Aug. 24 at Salem Hospital Family Birth Center.

He weighed 7 pounds, 9 ounces, and was 20 inches long.

Elias is the couple's first child.

Grandparent is Donald Berry, of Cascade Locks.

Kirk

Emma Louise Kirk was born to Sean Kirk and Erin Villwock, of Independence, at 9:33 a.m. on Aug. 29 at Salem Hospital Family Birth Center.

She weighed 7 pounds and was 20.5 inches long.

Emma is the couple's first child.

Grandparents are Janice Villwock, of Independence; Roger Villwock, of Monmouth; Tom and Donna Kirk, of Monmouth; and Laura Grey, of Monmouth.

Great-grandparents are Lloyd Wright, of Rickreall; and Mabel Hansson, of Peoria, Ariz.

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After a summer of sunshine, vacations and good times, school began yesterday for all of MI Town's younger residents. Our streets are filled with students walking to school or on corners waiting for the big, yellow school buses, as a brand new school year begins.

No matter how long it's been since we were in school, we look at those buses with a little bit of nostalgia in our hearts. I can remember riding the school bus for many years, and it was fun to see friends and neighbors every morning as we drove down rural roads and highways.

Some things never change as the years go by and, sadly, bullying is one of



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them. I can remember being bullied almost on a weekly basis by a mean girl and it was an awful experience. Back then it was apparently seen as a rite of passage and kids just had to deal with it. It's good that teachers and other school staff members and parents can now work together to help prevent bullying, but social media sure has made it easier for bullies to reach a wider audience. The best thing people can do is to teach their children to not use words or gestures that

hurt others — and to become aware of bad behavior before it escalates into something worse.

I've always thought of September as a time of new beginnings — even though our weather continues to be moderate, there is a definite change of seasons going on. The skies are darker by a few minutes every morning and our long, relaxing summer evenings won't return for several months, so it's time to think of projects to look forward to starting — or completing — and prepare for the season yet to come.

The gardens are still providing us with lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. Krist Obrist and her hard-working staff at the Monmouth Pub-

lic Library started a new program this spring — a seed lending library — where we could check out packets of various vegetable and flower seeds to plant at home. We enjoyed fresh peas in the early summer and are putting many containers of green beans in the freezer to enjoy this winter when vegetables fresh from the garden will just be a memory. It looks to be a bountiful year for grapes and the tomatoes just keep on giving us their all.

One sure sign that Miss Autumn is on her way to MI Town is the announcement of the Soup and Pie Sale at Monmouth Senior Center. The date is set for Oct. 15 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. More details to come in a future column.

PEDEE NEWS

As I write this I'm still on a two-week road trip with American Agri-Women, a national organization of farm women. I'm on the western states leg of AAW's "Drive Across America" with AAW president Sue McCrum, of Maine, celebrating our 40th year. We've been on some amazing ag tours, including an onion processing plant, cotton farm, date



ARLENE
KOVASH
Columnist

palm farm, and a luffa farm.

Things I bet you didn't know about some crops:

luffa sponges are grown on a vine much like a zucchini and are machine washable; if you cry while peeling onions you'll be resistant after twenty minutes and have no more trouble; hydroponic tomato plants grow 30 feet tall and use one-sixth the water of growing in soil; and avocados grow on the tree for two years before being picked. In

2014, there were more bees around than there have been in years and the technology agriculture is now using saves huge amounts of water and energy.

We also visited Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico, which are huge and fantastic — a prehistoric underground wonderland. Put this national park on your bucket list!

Sudoku
Difficulty: ★★★★★

Row →

Three-by-three square →

Column

How to do Sudoku
Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in every column, row, and three-by-three square. See example above.

The Christian Science Monitor

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