

GTA Today



September/October 2010
Volume 25 ♦ Number 5



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Working for agriculture

By Bryan Tolar, Georgia Agribusiness Council

As lawmakers struggle with ideas to jumpstart the economy through job creation and lower taxes, they settled on the notion that Georgia tax code needs a thorough review and, perhaps, a rewrite.

So, in the 2010 legislative session, the Georgia General Assembly passed HB 1405, which established a "Council on Tax Reform and Fairness" and a "Special Joint Committee on Georgia Revenue Structure" to conduct this thorough study of the state's current revenue structure and make a report of its findings and recommendations for legislation to the Speaker of the House and the Lieutenant Governor no later than January 10, 2011 (the start of the 2011 legislative session).

Georgia agriculture has a lot at stake in these discussions and findings. While there are more than 100 stated tax exemptions in Georgia law, over 20 of them benefit agriculture, from pesticides, fertilizer, irrigation fuels, farm equipment and the like.

With the need to protect Georgia agribusiness economy and small business interests across the state, the Georgia Agribusiness Council joined forces with seven other similar business organizations (Georgia

Chemistry Council, Georgia Farm Bureau, Georgia Forestry Association, Georgia Mining Association, Georgia Paper and Forest Products Association, Georgia Poultry Federation and the Georgia Traditional Manufacturers Association) to form the Coalition for a Competitive Georgia (CCG). In doing so, we combined resources to secure the services of longtime friend, former state representative and tax expert, Richard Royal. Richard was very helpful to the agriculture community during his service in the Georgia General Assembly for over 20 years. His knowledge of the Georgia tax code as it relates to our industry interests is second to none.

We are very pleased that the Georgia Turfgrass Association and other organizations have contributed generously to help fund this initiative. The Council on Tax Reform and Fairness met in Atlanta on July 28 to initiate the process of examining Georgia's state tax code. Tax Council Chairman A. D. Frasier made it clear that the purpose of the Tax Council is not to raise revenue but to examine the tax code for fairness and to assure that it is pro-growth. We are already in communication with members of the tax council as we provide

information about sales tax exemptions on many agricultural inputs that help to bolster agribusiness across the state while helping keep us competitive with neighboring states. A series of public hearings was conducted to receive ideas and concerns from Georgia citizens and businesses regarding the review process of Georgia's state tax code. Georgia Agribusiness Council members and others in agriculture have been very active in the public comment process. GAC staff spoke at the first public hearing and outlined the importance of maintaining and growing jobs in Georgia, rural communities in particular. GAC has been invited to make a presentation to the full Tax Council during a scheduled meeting in late September to further express the need for tax exemption on inputs for agricultural production. There is much to consider and we encourage you to utilize the resources at <http://fiscalresearch.gsu.edu/taxreform/> to keep pace. The Georgia Agribusiness Council will continue to be vigilant in our communication with members of the Tax Council throughout this process. Feel free to send your comments and suggestions to btolar@ga-agribusiness.org.

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President's Message

Josh Morrow

Greetings from the Georgia Turfgrass Association! Summer lasted well into late September this year, and as I write this letter we are experiencing our first signs of fall! I hope you and your company have been able to survive the heat and long summer!

With the changing of seasons comes great opportunities for the GTA and its members. We are in the process of finalizing our educational classes and planning an exciting *Turfgrass Institute and Trade Show* set for December 8-9, 2010 at the Gwinnett Center. You will not want to miss this year's event! The GTA Board of Directors are putting together a great set of educational classes that will offer opportunities for business owners, as well as gaining knowledge in turfgrass, plants and trees, water and irrigation, and using chemicals. CEUs will once again be available. Our trade show planning committee is working on some great new ideas to draw excitement to our trade show floor. And as always, you will want to come visit one-on-one with the industry's leading companies that are participating as vendors.

Attendee registration material will be available later this fall and we are now accepting vendor registrations. All information will be posted to our website as it becomes available at www.turfgrass.org.

Happy fall and I hope to see you in December!

Josh A. Morrow



Mark your calendars . . .

Turfgrass Institute 
& *Trade Show* *December 8-9, 2010*
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Thousand Canker Disease may be new threat to black walnut trees in Georgia

By Jean Williams-Woodward, Associate Professor of Plant Pathology, University of Georgia

Are you ready for another damaging disease that has the potential to kill trees? It seems there are new pest threats all the time.

Emerald ash borer is killing ash trees in the mid-western states and was recently found in Tennessee. Laurel wilt is killing red bay trees along the Georgia/Florida/South Carolina coast. For years we have been dealing with the repercussions of *Phytophthora ramorum*, cause of sudden oak death in California.

Well not to sound alarming, but another disease has researchers in Colorado concerned that black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) will succumb to disease just like the American elm to Dutch elm disease and the American chestnut to chestnut blight.

The disease is called Thousand Canker Disease (TCD) of black walnut and it was recently identified in Knoxville, TN. This recent discovery is significant because the disease had not been detected east of the Mississippi River and was originally thought to be limited to Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and California. TCD is caused by a fungus, *Geosmithia morbida* sp. nov., that is introduced into the tree by the walnut twig beetle (*Pityophthorus juglandis*).

Infected trees die from multiple cankers that infect the cambial tissues of the black walnut trunk and branches. The trees are killed from a collective group of shallow cankers

that interfere with water and nutrient transport. This is similar to how *Seiridium* canker affects and kills Leyland cypress branches and trees.

On Arizona and California walnut, the disease causes minor damage affecting branch tips and acts as a natural thinner of foliage. However, the cankers produced on black walnut are larger and it affects larger branches and the trunk. Initial symptoms of infection are branch flagging (yellowing and browning) and crown decline, which may not be evident for several years after the beetles infest the tree.

Once infected with TCD, there is no cure and the tree will die. Once TCD symptoms are evident, the tree dies within 2 - 3 years. The twig beetles reproduce prolifically in black walnut. An infested walnut tree may contain tens of thousands of beetles that carry the fungus beneath their wings.

There is no control once the beetles infest the tree other than removal of infected trees and wood to reduce disease and beetle spread. Beetles can reproduce within cut logs and it is believed that transport of infested wood (logs with bark still attached) can spread the beetle and disease to new areas. Currently, the source of the beetle infestation and the disease in Tennessee is not known, but transport of beetle infested wood may be a possibility.

What makes this disease important and something to

be on the lookout for in Georgia is that based upon the severity of the disease on the affected trees in Tennessee, the beetle and disease has probably been in Tennessee for years before someone took a closer look as to why the trees were dying. Foresters initially believed the declining walnut trees were dying due to drought stress. The effect of environmental stress is evident throughout Georgia and on many tree species.

TCD has not been identified in Georgia. However, the native and planted range of black walnut encompasses almost all of Georgia, except the southeastern counties. The best control for this disease is early detection. If you see, have or receive calls from arborists, foresters or

homeowners with declining black walnuts showing flagging and crown decline, take a closer look for beetle exit holes in the trunk and/or branches and the darkly, discolored cankers beneath the bark. Samples should be taken to local county extension offices for submission to the Extension Plant Pathology Plant Disease Clinic in Athens for confirmation.

For more information and for images of the disease and beetle, visit the Tennessee Department of Agriculture website (<http://tn.gov/agriculture/regulatory/tcd.html>) and the TCD Research and Education website for Colorado State University (<http://www.colostate.edu/Dept/bspm/extension%20and%20outreach/thousand%20cankers.html>).

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Tall fescue interseeding: Considerations and techniques

By Dr. Clint Waltz, *Extension Turfgrass Specialist, The University of Georgia*

This summer has been more detrimental to tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*) than the past couple seasons. Likely as a result of hot and dry weather, the canopy of tall fescue stands started to thin in mid-June.

Typically this does not occur until mid-to late-July. As a result, September 2010 could be a season for greater interseeding, a practice of adding tall fescue into an existing stand.

Additionally, passing of the 2010 Water Stewardship Act allows for proper irrigation to achieve germination and growth. For success of either establishing a new tall fescue lawn or interseeding an existing lawn, consider the following techniques and practices.

Tall fescue is a popular cool-season grass species. It has a bunching growth habit but it is also weakly rhizomatous. Tall fescue is best adapted to Georgia's piedmont and is used for home lawns, general areas, and for soil stabilization. In general, the southern boundary for tall fescue adaptation and growth would be Griffin, although, it can be found in shaded or protected areas further south. Because it can be seeded, tall fescue is popular with do-it-yourself homeowners. Furthermore its popularity relates to its dark green color during the spring and fall.

The use of tall fescue has increased since the introduction of "turf-type"

cultivars in the early 1980's. The turf-type cultivars have darker green color, finer leaf blades, lower growth habit, greater density, and improved shade tolerance compared to the more traditional 'Kentucky 31' (K-31) type tall fescues. Some turf-type cultivars have deep extensive root systems and other characteristics for improved drought tolerance.

Establishment

September and October are the ideal months to plant tall fescue. Fescue seeded earlier is subject to heat stress and diseases, while planting later leaves the plant vulnerable to cold weather. Seeding in December and early spring is generally not recommended because the plant does not have adequate time to develop a deep root system needed to survive Georgia's hot summers.

During the summer months, it is common for the canopy of tall fescue to thin and become more open. This is a heat-stress survival mechanism that allows the plant to conserve energy until the weather is favorable for growth. However, a thinned and open canopy makes the tall fescue less competitive and more susceptible to summer annual grassy weeds, like crabgrass. Preemergence herbicides are needed to minimize weed pressure, but research has shown that these herbicides pose the least amount of risk to tall fescue that was seeded the previous September

and October. Tall fescue seeded in November and then treated with preemergence herbicides the following February had lower turfgrass quality ratings and reduced stand density compared to tall fescue seeded in October.

Soil Preparation

Proper soil preparation is critical for an effective seed establishment.

Rid the lawn of debris. Till in any amendments such as organic matter or topsoil and level the site. Collect a soil sample to obtain soil fertilizer recommendations. Incorporate the starter fertilizer and lime 3 to 4 inches into the soil before planting. If equipment permits, tilling deeper is always better.

Smooth the soil surface to prepare a good seedbed.

Seeding

To ensure varietal purity, plant seed that is certified and identified by a blue tag. Such seed has been tested and the information on the label is assured by law. In the retail market most tall fescue seed is available as a blend, where several tall fescue cultivars are blended together. Single cultivars are also available but often at a higher price compared to blends.

Orchardgrass is a common weed seed contaminate found in tall fescue seed, more so in K-31 than the improved turf-type cultivars, and is easily seen in lawns because of its blue-green color and faster growth rate. Unfortunately, it cannot be selectively

controlled with a herbicide.

The ideal seeding rate for tall fescue is 5 to 6 pounds per 1,000 square feet. To minimize skips and gaps, it is best to divide the seed into two equal portions and broadcast half in one direction and the remainder at a right angle to the first direction. This procedure is also recommended for fertilizer and granular pesticide applications. The seed can be lightly raked into the upper 0.25-inch of soil or pressed into the seedbed with a roller. Lightly apply a straw mulch to retain moisture, improve seed germination and prevent erosion.

Irrigation

After seeding, keep the upper 1 to 2 inches of soil moist but not wet for uniform seed germination. This usually means daily watering of about 1/8 to 1/4 inch for the first three weeks. As the seedlings develop, irrigate less frequently but wet the soil profile more deeply. Under good conditions tall fescue seed will germinate in 5 to 10 days and be ready for its first mowing in 2 to 3 weeks.

Mowing

Begin mowing at a height of 2 inches and as the seedlings mature, raise the cutting height to the 2.5- to 3-inch range. Once mature, the lawn can be maintained between 2 to 2.5 inches, but a height of 3 inches is suggested during the summer months. Use a mower

continued on page 6

The Georgia Turfgrass Expert

Special Thanks
**To the Expert
Question
Sponsor:**



The expert question for this newsletter is:

The next *Turfgrass Institute and Trade Show* is set for what date?

A.) October 8-9, 2010

B.) November 8-9, 2010

C.) December 8-9, 2010

D.) January 8-9, 2011

**Congratulations to winners of the
July/August expert question.**

1st Place - \$100 - Lisa Platt, Snellville Parks & Recreation Department

2nd Place - \$50 - Tabitha Coker, King Green

3rd Place - \$25 - Jerry Greene, Patten Seed Co./Super Sod

Last Issue's Answer: The UGA Turfgrass Field in Griffin, Ga., is a great way to learn about the turf industry, visit with industry professionals and earn CEU credits. This year's field day was scheduled for August 4.

To win the Georgia Turfgrass Expert contest, fax your answer to the GTA office 706/336-6898 along with your company name and mailing address by August 16, 2010. Correct responses are randomly drawn and cash will be awarded to those winners. Answers can be found within the body of this issue of GTA Today.

Tall fescue interseeding, continued from page 5

with a sharp blade and mow often enough so no more than one third of the leaf height is removed in a single mowing. Do not mow a grass when it is wet, especially young seedlings.

Reseeding

It is common for tall fescue lawns to thin and need periodic reseeding. Turf thinning is usually caused by environmental stresses and improper turf management: insufficient irrigation, too much nitrogen fertilizer, seeding with more than 6 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet or seeding in late fall or spring, mowing too low

or too high, pests like crabgrass or white grub infestation or disease problems like brown patch, and soil related problems like a hard compacted rootzone, and environmental conditions where tree shade and root competition compete for water and nutrients.

All of these factors can be mitigated with proper management.

If the lawn needs reseeding, estimate the percentage of tall fescue loss and multiply that number by the establishment seeding rate of 6 pounds per 1,000 square feet. For example,

if 50 percent (0.5) of the stand is lost, reseed with $0.5 \times 6 = 3.0$ pounds per 1,000 square feet. Spring reseeding is less successful because of the shorter establishment time before summer heat and moisture stress.

Getting the seed in contact with the soil is necessary to assure successful reseeding. First, mow the lawn at a height of 1 to 1.5 inches. Disturb the soil, preferably by coring or vertical mowing, before and/or after seed distribution. This equipment is often available at rental or garden centers.

Reseed thin areas with 2

to 6 pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet. Getting the seed below the existing turfgrass canopy and to the soil surface improves germination. Apply a starter fertilizer at 1.0 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet at this time. Finally, keep the soil moist as discussed for new lawn establishment.

In summary, successful seeding depends on proper soil preparation, good soil-to-seed contact and, proper water management. Start now, September is the ideal month to establish tall fescue.

Safety Evaluation

Common sense and accidents

Generally speaking, we are not born with common sense, we acquire it throughout life. Actually, common sense is really common experience, we learn about life from others' experiences as well as our own. Awareness of your environment, self-preservation and concern for your fellow workers are all factors in good common sense. Contrary to popular opinion, all workers can prevent themselves from getting hurt. The easy way to avoid pain is to observe how others have taken risks and been injured, rather than learning the hard way--from your own injury. That's common sense!

The experts say at least 80% of industrial accidents are caused by unsafe acts on the part of employees and not by unsafe conditions. Although employers are required by law to provide a safe and healthful workplace, it is up to you to be aware of your work environment and follow safe work practices. By avoiding unsafe acts and practicing common sense, your work will go smoother, with less chance for accidents.

Statistically, most accidents are caused by

unsafe acts, including:

1. Being in a Hurry - Sometimes there is more concern for completing a job quickly instead of safely. Take time to do a good job and a safe job.
2. Taking Chances - Daring behavior or blatant disregard for safe work practices can put the whole work team at risk. Follow all company safety rules and watch out for your fellow employees. Horseplay is never appropriate on the job and can lead to disciplinary action.
3. Being Preoccupied - Daydreaming, drifting off at work, thinking about the weekend and not paying attention to your work can get you seriously hurt or even killed. Focus on the work you are paid to do. If your mind is troubled or distracted, you're at risk for an accident.
4. Having a Negative Attitude - Being angry or in a bad mood can lead to severe accidents because anger nearly always rules over caution. Flying off the handle at work is potentially dangerous. Keep your bad moods in check, or more than one person may be hurt. Remember to stay cool and in charge of your emotions.
5. Failing to Look for Hidden Hazards - At many jobsites, work conditions

are constantly changing. Sometimes new, unexpected hazards develop. Always be alert for changes in the environment. Hidden hazards include spilled liquids that could cause slips and falls; out-of-place objects that can be tripped over; unmarked floor openings one could step into; low overhead pipes that could mean a head injury; and other workers who don't see you enter their hazardous work area.

Remember to stay alert for hazards, so you won't become one more accident statistic: You can do a quality job without rushing. Maintain a positive attitude and keep your mind on your work. This is just common sense--something smart workers use!

Backs and lifting

Do you realize you may be risking serious injury many times a day and not even know it? Well, it's true if you don't lift correctly. Improper lifting may cause back injuries that can take months and even years to heal. Sometimes they are permanent and disabling. A little know how, however, can enable you to lift correctly.

When preparing to lift, give the load the once-over. If it looks too heavy, don't be afraid to ask for help. Be sure you're wearing safety shoes. There is always the chance of dropping something on your toes. If the object has rough or sharp edges,

wear a good, tough pair of work gloves. They'll give you a good grip and protect your hands.

When making the lift, crouch down with the load between your legs and get a good grip on the object. As you rise, lift with your legs, keeping your back vertical and the load as close to you body as possible. If you have to place the load to your left or to your right, don't twist your body. Move your feet instead. When you have to lower a load, simply reverse the knees bent, back vertical procedure.

In reviewing lifting:

1. Don't lift more than you can handle. Ask for help with heavy loads;
 2. Wear safety shoes;
 3. If the object is rough or sharp, wear gloves;
 4. Lift with your legs and not your back;
 5. Keep the load close to your body; and
 6. Don't twist your body when placing a load to one side or the other. Move your feet instead.
- When it comes to lifting, don't break your back. Instead, lift right and give your back a break.

This information is available through a joint effort with the Georgia Agribusiness Council and Midwest Casualty Company.

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