

Meetings and Announcements

Bakersfield Fall Horticulture Class: Special Topics

A 10-week fall horticulture class series for landscapes, gardens and orchards: special topics will be offered Monday nights beginning October 8. The syllabus has been posted to this link [Special Topics Syllabus](#). Guest speakers will include Jim Downer of UC Cooperative Extension, Ventura County; Jerald Meadows of the National Weather Service, and Beth Brookhart Pandol of the Kern Water Association. I plan to present the latest information on rose rosette disease. Cost will be \$70. Register for class at [Special Topics Bakersfield Registration](#).

2019 Horticultural Study Tour: Thailand

Thailand is home to a number of botanic gardens, and a visit would provide exposure to the fascinating culture of Asia. Our itinerary begins with departure from Los Angeles on Sunday, January 17, and arrival in Chiang Mai. We plan to visit a number of landscapes and gardens, including Bhubing Palace, Wat Doi Suthep, garden Siribhume, Queen Sirikit Garden and others. There will also be visits to handicraft factories. Our timing also coincides with the Chiang Mai Flower Festival. From Chiang Mai we proceed to Bangkok to visit the Grand Palace, Support Foundation, and have a day trip to the River Kwai. This tour concludes Friday, February 8, but there will be an optional extension to Phnom Penh and Angkor Wat that extends to February 12. You can copy and paste this link to the Travel Gallery website: <https://www.travelgallery.com/hort-tour-thailand> Travel Gallery has graciously offered to handle the business arrangements for this tour as they have for previous tours, and without their participation the tours would not have been possible. If the flyer and cost are not on the website when you receive this newsletter, just check back in a few days, since I know TG is working on this.

Fall Horticulture Class—Tehachapi

Still not too late to join a fall horticulture class to be given in Tehachapi. The meeting location will be the Valley Oaks Charter School (we met there in 2014), on Thursdays, 5:30 – 8:00 pm, beginning August 30. A syllabus is available on our website at <http://cekern.ucanr.edu/>. I thank Valley Oaks and its principal, Tom Karnes, for cooperating for this class. Valley Oaks Charter School is located at 20705 South Street. That's near the Golden Hills / Old Town area. Cost will be \$75. Here is the credit card link if you want to pay that way, and the link is also on our website: <http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=25051>

Fall Turf Management

If you walk a dog, you might notice lawns around your neighborhood in various stages of health or difficulty. Since fall is a transition time for turfgrasses, and is also the best time of year to change from one turf type to another, let's consider what may be happening to several turfgrasses at this time of year.

Turfgrasses fall into two groups, warm season and cool season, in many ways opposites in preferences and adaptation. Warm season turfs like temperatures of 80-95 degrees, and possess drought and salinity tolerance. However, they turn brown and go dormant in winter. Common bermudagrass and hybrid bermudagrass are the most common warm season turfgrasses found around Bakersfield. In contrast, cool season grasses are well adapted to cold weather regions, stay green in our winters, and prefer temperatures of 60-70 degrees. High temperatures lead to stress, which may predispose the turf to disease. Tall fescue, often called "fescue," is the most common cool season turf in Bakersfield.

As we enter fall, tall fescue comes out of summer stress and enters a time more favorable for its growth. In the Rosedale area, in particular, sandy soils often make it difficult to sustain tall fescue during August, and disease may cause loss of the stand. Since tall fescue is a bunch grass with limited lateral spread, it may be necessary to reseed or re-sod areas that have been lost. The best time for reseeding is October when day temperatures are lower but still high enough for rapid seed germination. Many varieties of tall fescue are available, but avoid the old pasture-types 'Alta' and 'K-31.' The mowing height for tall fescue should be raised during summer to 2-3 inches, and fertilizer applied at a half-rate only to limit stress. Other cool season grasses, such as bluegrass, are generally not adapted to the valley floor, but new perennial ryegrasses are available that have much better heat tolerance than older varieties.

Bermudagrasses begin to slow in growth as we move into cooler weather. Bermudagrass is most susceptible to glyphosate (Roundup, other trade names) at this time of year, so if you want to change to another turf fall is the best time to kill the bermudagrass and switch to another turf. Hybrid bermudagrass was developed to be a warm-season alternative to the bentgrass found on golf greens and tees, and it does tolerate low mowing heights. However, mowing at heights below ½ inch will cause loss of root volume, causing the turf to thin resulting in weed invasion. Hybrid bermudagrass needs a reel mower for an even cut. The water and fertilizer needed to keep the grass dense will result in thatch buildup.

Thatch is the undecomposed layer of turf stems between the green grass blades and the soil. Clippings from mowing do not contribute to thatch. About a half-inch of thatch is desirable, but more than that makes the lawn surface rise (easily seen next to a driveway or sidewalk—see photo at right) and leads to uneven mowing. Thatch can also provide an environment for diseases and insects. Hybrid bermudagrass and zoysia such as 'El Toro' often need annual or bi-annual dethatching, whereas tall fescue develops little



if any thatch. Common bermudagrass can develop thatch, but common bermuda is often not fertilized very much if at all, so thatch does not develop. Common bermudagrass can be cut with a rotary mower, but it doesn't have the neatness of hybrid bermuda and so is not usually used for home lawns, but is found around offices and other commercial buildings.

Thatch is often removed in autumn by "renovating" or power-raking. "Renovating" has several meanings, so if you want thatch removal be sure to communicate clearly. The tool needed is a power rake, shown at right, which has metal teeth that swing on rotating axles. Power rakes can be rented and you can do the job yourself. Set the unit's depth so thatch is removed but not soil. Two or more passes may be necessary followed by raking to remove the debris from the lawn (photo at right, below), which can then be sent to greenwaste recycling.



The optimum timing for thatch removal does not coincide with the optimum timing for overseeding, although these two steps are often carried out together. If bermudagrass is not going to be overseeded, be sure to renovate early enough (September, early October) followed by a fertilizer application to allow the grass to recover before dormancy so weeds do not invade.



As for weeds, crabgrass plants can continue to enlarge in autumn. Herbicide treatment is not as effective in fall as compared to spring, and in a couple of months the crabgrass plants will die anyway. Regular mowing will limit seed-head formation. Other perennial weeds, such as dandelions or plantain, can be treated with herbicides throughout the fall. But, the key to weed management is a healthy, dense turf.

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Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science

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