

Drought Considerations

by Patricia Byrne

The summer drought has scorched just about everything this summer. Lawns that have been on an organic program the last couple of years have fared the drought better than most. Even if your lawn is so far gone that watering only washes the grass away to reveal it no longer has roots in the soil, it is not too late to save it for next year. September is still hot but sometimes we get lucky and get some rain. It may be too early to seed your lawn, but it is not too early to prepare the soil. It is not too late or too early to protect and provide nutrients for your trees. Mulching the lawn, flower beds, and around trees will help hold water in the soil when you soak the area. The severe summers have damaged the tree roots even if you cannot see it yet. You may look at your trees and shrubs and think the leaves are dry which is expected in this kind of drought. The state of the leaves is a sign as to how much water and nutrients are available to the tree from the soil around the root.

There are tree treatments that assist a tree in recovering when stressed. Aeration of the soil and the use of tree treatments and mulching the area around the root can improve the stamina of the tree before winter hits. Slow soaking the mulch and the soil down at the root level will carry the nutrients into the tree. By soaking the mulch, the soil will stay cooler at the root level and slow evaporation of the water from the soil and provides time for the root of the tree to take it up. As the mulch slowly breaks down, it provides more nutrients. Taking the steps to assure your trees survive the winter this year could save you a lot of money. Removal of a fallen tree can be very expensive. Soil renewal is vital to saving the lawn or success of seeding it. A light layer of fine mulch and minerals will help prepare soil for seeding. Sticker patches seem to take over when a lawn begins to die in this kind of drought. So whatever you do, do not forget to put corn Gluten on your lawn as a pre-emergent sometime between September 15th and October 15th. Repeat this again in mid February to prevent unwanted germination of weeds and stickers.

In August I was hearing that ticks were showing up in parts of the state where you usually do not have a problem with them. This can also be due to drought conditions. Diatomaceous Earth can be a deterrent to insect infestations when an even layer is dusted on the lawn, in flower beds, trees, and gardens. It is easier to deter and control insects if you do not allow them to become an infestation. One of my customers said she had put frontline and other products on her dogs and could not get the ticks off them. She had just taken her dogs to be dipped for fleas and ticks. If a dog already has ticks Diatomaceous Earth may seem like it isn't going to work. Since ticks that are already embedded in your pet have an endless supply of fluid from your pet it takes longer to kill them. Another problem is once a tick is embedded in your pet they are not crawling around or moving. That is why it is best to use it as a first line of defense. If the DE is already thoroughly distributed throughout the fur of your pet, the tick has to crawl through the DE to get to the skin to embed itself. That allows the DE to collect on the

tick while it is moving and causes it to become abraded and begin losing body fluid. If you have tried Front Line and the other leading Flea and Tick products that are on the market and your pet has ticks, I suggest you use a DE product with natural Pyrethrums in it. This agitates the ticks and causes them to move around more and die quicker.

I use the Crawling Insect DE without pyrethrums on my dog. She has never had a tick on her and has only gotten fleas once when I did not put the DE on her after a bath before I let her go outside. After I give my dog a bath, I dry her. I then put a skin moisturizer on her. It is kind of hard getting past the fur to her skin, but it seems to work. I also put it on her belly and armpits. Then I dust her as I rub her fur so that the DE is dispersed thoroughly throughout her fur. Some might think the lotion would plug the holes on the DE and make it not effective. That might be true if you mixed the DE with the lotion before applying it. Doing it the way I did, only helps the DE adhere to her fur. I bath her one every month or so. She travels with me and has to wander around unknown grounds that are sure to have fleas, yet she has never gotten them on her except for the time she did not have the DE on her.

When I first got my dog Chloe she would lick her belly and scratch it to the point it was almost raw. I noticed that if I add the Food Grade DE to her food she stops scratching and licking her belly. My brother's daughter had a dog that seemed to be allergic to all dog food. Babe scratched her face constantly and it would be bloody most of the time. They did everything the vet told them to do and tried every type of Dog food. Even on a vegetarian diet the dog itched. I suggested they add the DE to her food and she began to scratch less and less. After a while she no longer has to wear one of those collars that shield the face so they can't scratch it. I personally feel we are seeing allergies in our pets more these days because the grains used in them are GMO. I later changed dog food to a grain free dog food. She now is a healthy weight and does not constantly itch. If you add DE to your pet's food make sure it is approved as a feed additive. Perma-Guard Fossil Shell Flower is the best "Food Grade" DE is the very best on the market. Never feed a DE product that is used in swimming pools or filtration. That type has been heated and is a different mill size and is damaging if ingested.