



The American Lawn

Important news for our Customers and Friends

February 2016

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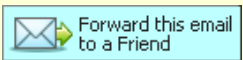
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Did Phil See His Shadow?



Well did Punxsutawney Phil see his shadow this morning? It appears that he may not have in Pennsylvania, the home of the legendary groundhog, but what about here in Oklahoma? Legend has it that if he sees his shadow, we're in for 6 more weeks of winter. We've really not had that much of a winter here in Oklahoma anyway, and it's been even in the 70's recently, but who knows what February may bring. So whether you believe the local weather forecasters or the local groundhog, just know that for

both, it's really just a crap shoot at this point in time.

So what's the difference between groundhogs and the [gophers and moles](#) we seem to have so much trouble with in Oklahoma lawns? They are all rodents, but members of different families. Groundhogs are in the marmot family, along with squirrels and chipmunks. They are larger than gophers, averaging about 20 inches long and 12-15 pounds. They have furry tails (much cuter) compared to the rat-like tails of gophers. Groundhogs are often referred to as Woodchucks also (how much wood does a Woodchuck chuck), and are one of the few animals that do actually hibernate during the winter.

Groundhog Day and the legend of Punxsutawney Phil started in the 1800's with the early German immigrants in Pennsylvania. It's all fun, but trying to forecast the

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weather especially here in Oklahoma can be tough even with all the technologies we have now. We just assume that the weather typically all works out in the wash, and that even with warm and cold spells, the soil temperature will always be in the mid-50's by late March to early April. Soil temperatures stay more consistent than air, and generally go up slowly from late winter into spring.

That's important for turfgrass managers such as us, who are responsible to have the [spring pre-emergent](#) applied and into the soil before the first flush of crabgrass later in spring. That's why the LawnAmerica guys and gals are out working away now in order to insure this is done well before weeds start popping up. The newer products we use such as Barricade don't really break down in the soil much with cool soil temperatures, so it's just fine to apply Barricade now, rather than waiting until the last minute and possibly missing the deadline to prevent weed seed germination.



Crepe Murder

The practice of chopping off the tops of crepe myrtles at this time of year has become very common in Oklahoma. We sometimes call it Crepe Murder at LawnAmerica, as it really hurts the look and health of the plant over time. Many folks believe this is necessary to promote flowering, but that is not necessarily the case. More often than not, it's something that some commercial maintenance companies tell you needs to be done, but really just gives them something to do in early winter. Pruning in late winter or early spring will stimulate vigorous new growth in spring, and may lead to slightly more blooms. However, they will bloom if pruning is not done.



Stubs forming from cuts in previous years.

Proper pruning can serve several purposes in plants, including crepe myrtles:

- To encourage blooming or fruiting
- To restrict growth
- To train the plant into a certain shape

- To improve the health of the plant

The main justification for pruning crepe myrtles is to develop the proper shape of the tree by removing suckers at the base and removing all limbs growing from ground level except 3-5 of the strongest limbs. As the tree matures, remove lower, lateral branches up to one-third to halfway up the plant, and ones that are crossing or rubbing against each other. Make your cuts to a side branch or close to the trunk, using good, sharp pruning shears.

Do corrective pruning to remove dead branches, and remove small twigs or branches in the center to create more open spaces for sun and air movement. If the plant is becoming too large, you can limb up or chop off the tops of the crepe myrtle in an attempt to keep it from becoming too large. Do not just cut it off at the same place every year though. If you have doubts about your ability to correctly prune, don't hesitate to contact a local arborist.



Check Plants for Scale in February



February is a good time to check woody plants for scale insect infestations. This time of year, deciduous plants do not have leaves, so scale is more easily seen. If a scale infestation is detected, a dormant oil treatment should be applied by late March.

Scale insects are often overlooked because they are small and immobile most of their lives and they do not resemble most other insects. They look more like small shells that are oval or circular and don't move. Coloring is most often white, tan, and brown.

Plants that are prone to scale issues include apples, pears, other fruit trees, crabapple, oak, ash, elm, lilac, maple, linden, pine, juniper, spruce and yew. Manhattan euonymus, a common broadleaf evergreen, is especially noted for having scale problems. Plants are not harmed if only a few scales are present. But scale population can increase dramatically during the growing season, so now is a good time to control them with our [Early Spring Dormant Oil Treatment](#). We also include a systemic insecticide with this, which is absorbed by plants and helps with

control on into summer months.

New Website Up and Running

Our new website is now live, having switched to a new company to help with this. Still have the same address, www.LawnAmerica.com, but it's easier to navigate, with more good information, and we even have pics of all our folks so you can learn more about who is helping you with your lawn. Our new site serves our main markets in Tulsa, OKC, and other areas in Oklahoma, so it's all information that is relevant to you. Our new branches in NC have their own site now.

We'll have a new and improved area on our site where you can pay for services, set up auto-pay, order optional and protection services, and [refer your friends and neighbors](#) to us. Very soon you'll hear about changes with our referral program, giving you the option to have us donate \$50 to your favorite area non-profit for every referral you send our way.

[Let us know](#) what you think or if you have any suggestions on how to improve our site by sending me an e-mail directly, as it is one of the main ways we communicate with our customers.

I appreciate your business,
Brad Johnson
LawnAmerica Inc.



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Our Mission at LawnAmerica is to please you so much as a customer that you'll tell others about us. So if you are happy with our service, please tell your neighbors and friends about LawnAmerica. If your referral begins service with us, we'll send you a \$25 Gift Card to a local restaurant as our way of saying THANKS.

You can call us or provide the name of your referral on our website. Or if they call, just have them tell us your name so we can properly track that and send you the gift card. We really appreciate your help in growing our business. Doing a great job and earning referrals is how we've grown our business, so we appreciate your help with this!



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