

By: Lee Peacock

Problems with centipede greening up in the spring can most often be attributed to one of the following things.

- Exceeding 50# of Nitrogen per acre per year. One of the worst things you can do to centipede grass is over fertilization. To figure how many #'s of nitrogen you are putting out, take the first percentage in the analysis of the fertilizer and multiply it by the no. of pounds in the bag. Example: A50# bag of 16-4-8 has  $50 \times .16 = 8\#$  of nitrogen. So on 1 acre of centipede, you would not want to put out any more than about 6, 50 # bags of 16-4-8 fertilizer. Six bags  $\times 8\#$ 's of nitrogen per bag = 48#'s of nitrogen. I would recommend dividing that into two or three applications.
- Applying Nitrogen past August 15<sup>th</sup>. When you fertilize too late in the growing season, you run a higher risk of having winter kill and also a slow green up process in the spring. Nitrogen makes the plant softer and therefore more likely to have frost damage.
- Applying Nitrogen too early in the spring before the last frost. In middle GA, our last frost is traditionally around the middle of April. If you fertilize the first time you see centipede green up in the spring, you can get extensive damage if the plant takes up the nitrogen and is then followed by a frost. This will cause centipede to have a much slower green up process and in some cases will kill the plant. My recommendation is to wait until the end of April or first of May to fertilize. By doing this you will get more use from your fertilizer because the plant is growing more as the soil temperatures rise and will therefore take up more of the fertilizer.
- Over fertilization causes thatch build up which also causes winter kill and a slow green up in the spring. If you get behind on your mowing and have a lot of clippings, it is best to bag your clippings to prevent centipede from forming a root system in the thatch build up.
- Also remember that centipede sod that is laid dormant or is purchased before the first of May has not been fertilized. As centipede is greening up in the spring it needs to be fertilized in order to fill in seems and places that may have been lost during the winter. Centipede is a slow growing low maintenance grass and therefore will grow in and improve from being laid in the winter very slowly if it is not fertilized in the spring. When you purchase centipede from us in the spring we will let you know if it has

already been fertilized or not at the farm so you will then know how much of the allotted 50# of nitrogen per acre per year has already been applied.