One of the great plant success stories of recent years has to be the Encore azaleas. Developed by azalea breeder Buddy Lee of Independence, Louisiana, this group of evergreen plants provides decent spring color and an even better flower show in the fall.

Twenty-three selections of Encore azaleas are currently available. Visit www.encoreazalea.com to see the different forms and flower colors.

Rather than list a lot of information you can find elsewhere, included are some personal observations about this great group of plants.

Encores definitely have the same growing requirements as other evergreen azaleas. Success depends on high organic matter soil and good drainage. A soil pH between 5.5 and 6.0 works best. Higher pH’s result in typical iron chlorosis. The plant tag offers that these azaleas handle full sun better than other azaleas. That may be true, but the ones I’ve grown in my own garden perform best with a bit of protection from the hottest summer sun.

Four years ago I planted several of the Autumn Empress azaleas – a medium height, hose-in-hose pink with excellent foliage – in a site that wasn’t ideal. They didn’t die but certainly didn’t thrive. I rescued three of them and re-planted in a more typical “azalea” growing area. They have done well since the move becoming one of my favorite Encores.

Another favorite is Autumn Twist. This vigorous grower has a bit of an identity crisis sporting out blooms that range from dominantly lavender to almost completely white and lots with variegated white and lavender in between. Twist isn’t the choice for large beds of a single variety when you’re going to for mass effect, but it’s great as a single specimen or small grouping.

Last year I added two white selections to the garden – Autumn Moonlight and Autumn Starlight. Moonlight has clear, vibrant white blooms that are great next to a walkway picking up that last bit of daylight and playing off your landscape lighting. Starlight has variegated blooms that are mostly white with streaks of light purple.

Of the thirteen that I have added to my own garden and all of the others I’ve had the opportunity to see growing locally, I don’t think you’ll go wrong with any of the Encore azaleas. While the flower show doesn’t quite have the “knock your socks off” effect of the regular spring bloomers at any one time, it’s great to have color three to four months of the year.
Managing Large Patch Disease of Turf

Large patch is a chronic problem in coastal Carolina landscapes, and late summer is the best time to treat with fungicides (more on fungicides below). Symptoms of the disease include roughly circular patches of turf that are yellow, tan, or straw-brown. The patches may start at 2-3 ft in width, but will expand up to 10 ft or more. As they expand they become irregular in shape. Reddish-brown or gray lesions appear on the leaf sheaths.

Unfortunately the fungus that causes large patch (Rhizoctonia solani) is everywhere, just waiting for conditions that allow its spread. Large patch is favored by soil temperatures below 70 F, air temperatures between 50-85 F, and extended periods of wet grass. Turf managers' first, and best, line of defense is to interrupt those conditions so the disease never gets started. For example, reducing thatch and improving drainage will also remove an environment that supports large patch. Another key component of large patch control is irrigation management (which unfortunately is not always under the turf manager's control). As we get into the fall, turf uses much less water than during the heat of summer. For most lawns, the natural rainfall will supply all the water the turf needs, and applying unnecessary irrigation just promotes disease. Fall nitrogen applications will also favor disease development because the new and tender growth will be very easy for the fungus to infect.

The fungus is actually alive and active throughout the fall, winter, and spring. In summer, the fungus is less active, and infected turf generally recovers. A well timed fungicide application can prevent re-infection in the fall. Once the grass is infected (usually beginning around Labor Day), it will stay infected until the following summer. Spring treatments will prevent the spread but will not clean up problem areas. In some situations spring treatment may be required, but a more economical approach is to map infected areas and treat in the fall.

Research at NC State has found that fungicides containing azoxystrobin (Herritage – 0.4 oz / 1000 ft²) result in the greatest control. However, Herritage is part of a class of fungicides known as sotrebilurins to which fungi are relatively likely to develop resistance. To guard against resistance, do not make more than two consecutive applications without switching to a product with a different mode of action. Triadimefon (Bayleton – 2.0 oz / 1000 ft²) is in a different class and also produces very good control. An application should be made once soil temperatures drop to 70F, typically at the end of August or early September. A second application can be made 14-28 days later and will offer even greater control.

Large Patch Management Summary:
- Avoid excessive fall N fertilization
- Reduce thatch
- Improve soil drainage and aeration
- Carefully manage irrigation
- Treat with fungicides (azoxystrobin and/or triadimefon) in late summer

New Products

Acelepryn by Dupont is a new product for many landscape pests, including grubs and caterpillars. It can be used as a foliar spray or drench to provide translaminar and systemic plant protection. This unique chemical has a very low vertebrate toxicity and does not require a signal word on the label. More information about Acellepryn can be found at http://www2.dupont.com/Professional_Products/en_US/acelepryn/.

Kontos by OHP is a new product for managing sucking pests in the greenhouse and nursery. It is effective against whiteflies (including the “Q” biotype), aphids, mealybugs, thrips, and more. For more information on Kontos, see http://www.ohp.com/PiB/PDF/kontos_490_pib.pdf.

Both products have a different mode of action than traditional products and, if used in rotation with other products, can be a good tool to reduce insect resistance. Additionally both products are less toxic to vertebrates, pollinators, and beneficial insects than products such as organophosphates and pyrethroids.
Preparation Turf for Winter

This spring, when grass should have been greening-up, it became clear that the winter had been tough on turf. Areas of straw brown grass, bleached grass, and dead grass occurring in haphazard patterns are all indications of winter kill. Damage is often erratic due to slight variations in level of shade, soil type, thatch levels, and elevation. This illustrates that well managed and healthy turf is the best defense against winter kill. Here are some things you can do this fall to help prepare turf for winter.

**Nutrition**

Plants that are starved will not be able to survive the winter as well as properly nourished plants. Often injury occurs not in the middle of winter when it is coldest, but in late winter when energy reserves are near exhaustion. To maintain turf fertility, keep the pH in the recommended range for the grass type and fertilize according to schedule. Beware of fertilizing with nitrogen too late in the season. A nitrogen application at any point after August may encourage unwanted lush growth. This causes two big concerns in our climate: 1) susceptibility to attack by Large Patch disease, and 2) delayed dormancy that makes turf vulnerable to early winter cold snaps. If you do fertilize in the fall, use low nitrogen, high potassium (K) fertilizer. Potassium can enhance cold tolerance when applied at 1 pound per 1000 square feet. A good fertilizer choice is Sul-Po-Mag (0-0-22) applied at 5 lbs per 1000 ft². Sul-Po-Mag (also known as K-Mag) will also supply magnesium, which is often lacking in our soils, without raising the pH. Among other options are potassium sulfate (0-0-50) at 2 lbs /1000 ft² and muriate of potash (0-0-60) at 1.6 lbs /1000 ft².

**Protect the growing points**

Keeping the growing points of the turf protected during the winter will enhance cold tolerance. In the winter, the soil is generally warmer than the air and can insulate turf from damage. Thatch buildup can prevent the soil from doing a good job of this. Unfortunately the time to deal with thatch is around May. One thing you can do in the fall is raise the mowing height 0.5 in for bermuda, zoysia, and St. Augustine. The longer top growth will allow turf to make more food and longer roots. Do not raise the mowing height on centipede. Also, continue to mow until the grass has completely stopped growing. If you stop mowing, those growing points tend to rise up off the ground where they don't have as much insulation.

**Water management**

Cut back on irrigation in the fall because plants use less water in cooler temperatures. Also, too much water will delay dormancy and promote shallow roots that are more susceptible to cold. That said, one of the causes of winter kill is drying out in the deep of winter, particularly in windy and exposed areas. If we have not received much rain in January and February, turning on the irrigation can help prevent desiccation.

**Final Considerations**

Any factor that influences turf health will also affect its ability to survive winter. For example, shady areas stay colder and don't allow the turf to make enough food for winter. Poorly drained and low lying areas are more likely to experience freezing and thawing cycles that damage turf growing points. Compacted soils stay colder. All of these factors illustrate that well managed turf is the best defense against winter kill, and grass that is healthy when entering dormancy has the best chance to emerge in the spring. Good luck this winter!

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**Timely Tips**

**It's too late!**

Pruning trees and shrubs may stimulate a flush of growth that will not have time harden off before winter.

Think twice before fertilizing turf, trees, and shrubs with nitrogen after August. Plant metabolism is slowing down due to shorter days and cooler temperatures, and they may not be able to take up the fertilizer.

**Now is the time**

Apply fungicides in late August and early September to prevent large patch disease in turf areas with a history of problems.

Cool season turf weeds like annual bluegrass will start germinating in September. To prevent germination, use atrazine on centipede and St Augustine. For bermuda and zoysia do not apply atrazine until October. Use prodiamine (Barricade) in September for early season control.

**Not yet...**

Wait until October to install pansies and violas because warm temperatures in September exacerbate problems with Thielaviopsis root rot. If plants must be installed in September, apply a fungicide [thiophanate methyl (Cleary’s 3336)] at planting.
### Fall Pro Day 2009

**Friday ~ October 2, 2009**  
**Brunswick Community College ~ Supply Campus**  
**50 College Road ~ Bolivia, NC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30—10:00 am</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 —11:00 am</td>
<td>Dudley Do Right’s Guide to Pesticide Application</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[sprayer calibration and adjustment, nozzle uniformity]</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 am—12:00 noon</td>
<td>Equipment Demonstrations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[tying anyone to railroad tracks is strictly prohibited]</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 noon—1:00 pm</td>
<td>Lunch and Equipment Demonstrations</td>
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<td>[enjoy a free lunch]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00 —2:00 pm</td>
<td>Snidely Whiplash Talks Turf</td>
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<td>[controlling villainous weeds]</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:00 —3:00 pm</td>
<td>Irrigation Troubleshooting w/Rocky and Bullwinkle</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:00—3:15 pm</td>
<td>Wrap Up/Evaluation</td>
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**Equipment Show**

**Irrigation CEU’s**

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**Contact Information**

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or  
www.ces.ncsu.edu/brunswick

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