Grimm's Goodies

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The Smell of Autumn.....

Well folks, it's just about time for leaf clean up again. The trees are showing their beautiful colors and the leaves are beginning to drop. Before you know it, we will be talking about snow!

That means it is about time to get those leaves off of your beautiful turf. We are currently in the process of coordinating your regular mowing schedule with leaf clean up. Rest assured that we will be working 'til dark and dodging the raindrops to make that mess disappear.

Along with our fall services, we will be giving the yards a final cut and bagging off any debris left from the trees. Also, some of you have requested gutter cleaning and that will be performed on our second visit of fall clean up.

For those of you who have the benefit of city pick up, my foreman has received schedules from most municipalities and we will be attempting clean up 1-3 days prior to city crews arriving. And don't forget that for our clients in the City of Akron, there will only be one pick up late in the season. As for the rest of you folks, we will be converting two of our

dump trucks into leaf haulers as usual and will be out to see you soon!

If you have any questions as to when we will be coming, please call. And if you know anyone who hates to rake leaves, please let them know that there are alternatives and help is only a phone call away!

The Scary Sights of Winter.....

With November just around the corner, the threat of that white stuff is growing larger by the day. Now I know that most of you would just as soon pretend that it doesn't snow during the winter, but the fact is that it does. ☺

So far, the "experts" are calling for yet another strong winter which could mean lots of ice and snow. I am actually expecting a more moderate winter. Then again, I also thought we would have an early autumn! Regardless of what old man winter brings to town this year, it is much better to be prepared than get caught stuck in the middle of the drive when it's 20 below. Give us a call and we can add your name to our regular plow routes. Then you won't even have to call when it snows!

Where Do These Beautiful Colors Come From?

We are blessed that we live in one of those parts of the world where Nature has one last fling before settling down into winter's sleep. As days shorten and temperatures become crisp, the quiet green palette of summer foliage is transformed into the vivid autumn palette of reds, oranges, golds, and browns before the leaves fall off the trees. On special years, the colors are truly breathtaking.

For years, scientists have worked to understand the changes that happen to trees and shrubs in the autumn. Although we don't know all the details, we do know enough to explain the basics and help you to enjoy more fully Nature's multicolored autumn farewell. Three factors influence autumn leaf color-leaf pigments, length of night, and weather, but not quite in the way we think. The timing of color change and leaf fall are primarily regulated by the calendar, that is, the increasing length of night. None of the other environmental influences-temperature, rainfall, food supply, and so on-are as unvarying as the steadily increasing length of night during autumn. As days grow shorter, and nights grow longer and cooler, biochemical processes in the leaf begin to paint the landscape with Nature's autumn palette.

A color palette needs pigments, and there are three types that are involved in autumn color.

Chlorophyll, which gives leaves their basic green color. It is necessary for photosynthesis, the chemical reaction that enables plants to use sunlight to manufacture sugars for their food. Trees in the temperate zones store these sugars for their winter dormant period.

Carotenoids, which produce yellow, orange, and brown colors in such things as corn, carrots, and daffodils, as well as rutabagas, buttercups, and bananas.

Anthocyanins, which give color to such familiar things as cranberries, red apples, concord grapes, blueberries, cherries, strawberries, and plums. They are water soluble and appear in the watery liquid of leaf cells.

Both chlorophyll and carotenoids are present in the leaf cells throughout the growing season. Most anthocyanins are produced in the autumn, in response to bright light and excess plant sugars within leaf cells.

During the growing season, chlorophyll is continually being produced and broken down and leaves appear green. As night length increases in the autumn, chlorophyll production slows down and then stops and eventually all the chlorophyll is destroyed. The carotenoids and anthocyanins that are present in the leaf are then unmasked and show their colors.

Certain colors are characteristic of particular species. The timing of the color change also varies by species. These differences in timing among species seem to be genetically inherited, for a particular species at the same latitude will show the same coloration in the cool temperatures of high mountain elevations at about the same time as it does in warmer lowlands.

The amount and brilliance of the colors that develop in any particular autumn season are related to weather conditions that occur before and during the time the chlorophyll in the leaves is dwindling. Temperature and moisture are the main influences.

A succession of warm, sunny days and cool, crisp but not freezing nights seems to bring about the most spectacular color displays. During these days, lots of sugars are produced in the leaf but the cool nights and the gradual closing of veins going into the leaf prevent these sugars from moving out. These conditions-lots of sugar and lots of light-spur production of the brilliant anthocyanin pigments, which tint reds, purples, and crimson. Because carotenoids are always present in leaves, the yellow and gold colors remain fairly constant from year to year.

The amount of moisture in the soil also affects autumn colors. Like the weather, soil moisture varies greatly from year to year. The countless combinations of these two highly variable factors assure that no two autumns can be exactly alike. A late spring, or a severe summer drought, can delay the onset of fall color by a few weeks. A warm period during fall will also lower the intensity of autumn colors. A warm wet spring, favorable summer weather, and warm sunny fall days with cool nights should produce the most brilliant autumn colors.

Winter is a certainty that all vegetation in the temperate zones must face each year. Perennial plants, including trees, must have some sort of protection to survive freezing temperatures and other harsh wintertime influences. Stems, twigs, and buds are equipped to survive extreme cold so that they can reawaken when spring heralds the start of another growing season. Tender leaf tissues, however, would freeze in winter, so plants must either toughen up and protect their leaves or dispose of them.

The evergreens-pines, spruces, cedars, firs, and so on-are able to survive winter because they have toughened up. Their needle-like or scale-like foliage is covered with a heavy wax coating and the fluid inside their cells contains substances that resist freezing. Thus the foliage of evergreens can safely withstand all but the severest winter conditions, such as those in the Arctic. Evergreen needles survive for some years but eventually fall because of old age.

It is quite easy to see the benefit to the tree of its annual leaf fall, but the advantage to the entire forest is more subtle. It could well be that the forest could no more survive without its annual replenishment from leaves than the individual tree could survive without shedding these leaves. *Source: US Department of Forestry*