



Owned & Operated by
Jeff & Debra Melmer

EMAIL THE EDITOR

Do you have a question or comment you would like addressed in an upcoming newsletter?

Send them to the editor at:
qualityfirst@qfls.co

TIS THE SEASON

The holidays are almost upon us. This alone makes this a busy time of the year. For your landscape this makes it an extremely challenging time of year. This is the beginning of FUNGUS season.

Large Patch, Zoysia Patch or as it is commonly called Brown Patch Fungus are all the same Rhizoctonia Blight or stem rot disease. This disease is very common throughout our area. The frequency of moisture being added will drive this disease, it is primarily a seasonal disease, and this is the season.

If you have had Brown Patch Fungus in the past it is likely you will have it again. It is a soil born organism that will survive in the soil all year long. It is a valuable organism that breaks down organic matter back into the soil. When conditions get right it begins to spread aggressively to the point that it begins to damage healthy tissue. You can play a key role in controlling this disease by reducing your irrigation frequency. As temperatures cool down soil does not dry as quickly, so replenishing the moisture will be required less frequently. This is good news for those wishing to save some money on the monthly water bill.

Irrigation and irrigation frequency is something we talk about all year. In spring it starts getting hot and we have to water more. Then in early summer it gets real hot but it also starts raining. Sometimes it may rain hard in one area and less than a mile away there is no rain for days. Summer is a very tough season for irrigation. One week there is not enough water and the next everything is drowning. In the fall it tends to cool off but with the cooler weather comes lower humidity. We can go for days with no rain and then all of a sudden on one hot dry windy day everything dries up. Winter is usually the most stable time of the year for irrigation. It is cool, the days are short, and plants slow greatly concerning growth and need for moisture resulting in a very low need comparably for added irrigation.

This time of the year we need you to reduce the frequency. Irrigating every 3rd or 4th day is more ideal for landscape in full sun. Shady, low, wet, and lake side properties require even less. These areas likely will only need water one time per week.

MANAGING YOUR LANDSCAPER

For those of us who do our own lawn maintenance, it is easy to know what to do on which plants based on how we want things done.

For those of us who use landscapers it makes life easier, but do they always know what to do, or do they always do what we want done?

One of the more common statements we hear is "they should just know". This is where managing our landscapers comes into play.

Communication is critical. If you do not explain or communicate what you want or what you expect, you will probably end up with less than expected. Do not assume they know. There is so much to know and so many different ways to do things very few people if any can say they know it all.

There are many landscapers that do a fantastic job. They continue to advance their knowledge and that of their employees. For too many they only do what they have been taught because "that is the way we have always done it". This is where you can help them. Communicate with, teach, and educate your crew about your property and what you want and expect. Everyone has the common goal of making the customer happy and getting paid for the work we have done. The way to be sure you get what you want is to make sure everyone knows what you want.

With all the new plants that enter our marketplace annually to all the existing plants in our landscapes and ongoing changes both seasonally and culturally, there is a lot to know. "Right Plant in the Right Place" These are wise words but not always adhered to.

Landscaping is about achieving balance. One side of the home is full sun, the other partial or full shade. Low and wet areas, dry or well drained areas, root compaction all make landscaping a real challenge. We are all supposed to be experts and just know how to handle turf and plants under these challenging factors. Add in the seasonal issues like rain, heat, cold, and landscaping is not the easiest of jobs to manage.

This is why it takes a team effort. If we all communicate about what we want and what we expect, half the battle is won. The other half is execution. Daily, weekly, and monthly management of our crews, our irrigation, and our landscapers.

Some properties never have issues, all is planned, prepared, and maintained as expected. Some landscapes just seem to be more challenging, in these cases maybe changes are needed. These are usually on a case by case basis and should be addressed in terms of correcting the issue for long term success. Some landscapes may just be getting tired or old. In our landscapes today if we get 10 to 15 years we have succeeded. That does not mean that all has to change but some changes may be beneficial just to freshen up and enhance our landscape.

Change is sometimes necessary, change can be a good thing, as past changes or additions may have failed for a variety of reasons.

MANAGING YOUR LANDSCAPER Continued from page 1

During the summer months and especially the rainy season it is difficult to keep up with everything. Plant growth, weed growth, and vines that seem to grow several inches to a foot each day take over the landscape. Good communication and inspecting what you expect may aid greatly in helping your crew keep up with your landscape. As we get further into the fall / winter months, plant growth begins to slow down so less time is required mowing and trimming. This is the best time to get caught back up. Things like cleaning up under and behind shrubs we could not get to during the rainy season. Begin doing some of the things commonly done as part of the "Big Spring Clean-up". With the exception of major pruning, most of what needs done in the spring can be done in bits and pieces over the winter, giving everyone more time to do a really good job. It is also a good time to start planning for or even beginning future landscape changes.

We work directly with most all of the landscapers our customers use. Some we even have weekly if not daily communications with. We are very sure they will be willing and receptive to your communications with them. It all boils down to keeping you happy as a customer. It would be wonderful if everyone was on the same page and knew everything there is to know about landscape. While that is highly unlikely, everyone working together as a team can achieve the best results possible.

LESSONS WITH Lynn

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

This time of year there is a lot going on. Shopping, guests, bringing stuff down from the attic, garage, or shed, and so on. Since we live in this beautiful state many of us will have the doors and windows open and some even a party or two on the back patio. I would like to share some tips on keeping pests out, and no, we cannot help with "Uncle _____"!

When you bring in the holiday decorations, open the boxes in the garage and take just a minute to visually ensure no pests have set up housekeeping in the container. After a quick inspection you should be able to move the boxes and containers inside the living space.

Merchandise in the stores goes flying off the shelves this time of year. It is the least likely time to bring home hitch-hikers when making purchases. However, you early shoppers should take just a minute to look over the holiday items that may have been in storage all summer from last year. It is common for stores to break out what didn't sell last holiday season and put it on the shelves. Just look for any signs of bugs or pepper size particles in the container.

On those cool nights when you decide to light up the fireplace make sure you open the flue. Maybe even have a little reminder to close it when done, so your HVAC dollars don't get sucked out the chimney. Every year we get calls about bugs showing up around the fire place. When it is cold the pest hiding in the wood will become extremely lethargic. When you bring that wood inside, and it begins to warm up, the pest may become active. If you store your firewood outside try not to bring in more than you plan to use and again it might be wise to bring some in the garage where it will stay dry and the pests will leave before you bring it into the living area.

Having an outside event? Those pesky mosquitoes will be trying to crash your party. For those of you that already have mosquito control you can call at the beginning of the month and schedule your treatment 3 to 7 days prior to your event. If you have not signed up for mosquito control we will be very happy to provide you with a one-time service at a very reasonable rate. We are certain you will be surprised with how well it works at keeping the mosquitos away.

Finally if you do have any issues through the holidays just give us a call and we will do all we can to get the pest out before the guests arrive. Best wishes to all and your families!

MINUTE WITH Mike



PERSONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

Hello to all the friends and family of Quality First Lawn, Shrub & Home Services!

One of the most important features of our brand of service is the development of a relationship between the Technician and the Property Owner. We are one of the few companies, maybe the only company, which sends the same Technician to the same properties on a regular basis. This allows the Technician to get to know the property and the Property Owners and for the Property Owners to get to know their Technician. This creates a teamwork approach and a much greater chance of lasting success in the treatment and maintenance of your property. The communication between the Property Owners and their Technician is a key component of this approach. One issue we have come across in this relationship is the Property Owner calling their Technician directly with an issue that may have come up and bypassing our office. Our Technicians serve anywhere from 10-20 properties a day and are very busy. If they don't properly log and communicate the issue to the office there is the possibility the issue may become lost in the business of the day and we lose traceability in ensuring your issue is taken care of in a timely manner. Please, contact our office directly with any issues you may have. It is our responsibility to properly log and communicate the issues to your Technician and follow up to ensure the issue has been treated accordingly. This is not to say you cannot call your Technician, but if you have an issue, please call the office first. Thank you. 407-737-1889

I would like to take a moment to introduce the latest addition to our office staff, Talia Melmer-Riebe. Yes we have added another Melmer to our family run company. Talia and her daughters, Layla & Maya moved to the Sunshine state from the cold confines of Minnesota just in time to escape those brutal Mid-Western winters! Talia and kids are the daughter and grandchildren of Mike & Kelly Melmer. Talia will be the Quality First Home Services Administrator and most likely the first voice you will hear when calling our office!

In closing I'd like to thank all of you for allowing us to serve you. It is truly our honor to do so!

SECOND WITH *Scott*



FLOWERING PLANTS

In this article we are going to talk about Flowering Plants. Fall, which is finally here, is the best time to enjoy our blooming plants. With the weather change bringing cooler nights and warm days “not too hot.”

We see a dramatic change in our landscape plants. Gardenia's budding and blooming. These also have a lot of leaf drop this time of year or yellowing foliage. Be prepared for Camellias which are so prolific and showy. These are my favorite plants, to watch them change. It is not uncommon for a plant to not bloom along with the rest. It could be the soil, its age, the way it was pruned and when, it gets just a little more or less sun. We always apply the proper nutrients to your plants based on the plant. These environmental conditions are not so controllable. So if you have that one plant that just does not bloom, do a comparison with the others and you might think of an event or cause that can be corrected. By the way, sometimes Mother Nature is just having an effect.

There are numerous other blooming plants; Roses, Bougainvillea, Mandevilla, Bromeliads, Susanqua Camelia, Crown of Thorns, Hamelia-Colusa (Humming Bird Bush), Tea Olive, Beautyberry, Hibiscus, Fashion, Vivid, and Duc de Rohan Azaleas, Oleander, Tibouchina, Thryallis, Jatropa, Downy and Angelwing Jasmine, Asian Snow, Buttercup, Poinsettia, and Christmas Cactus, Plumbago. And Crotons with their many varieties are always colorful. Even some of the trees are blooming like Silk Floss, Cassia, and Bottle Brush.

We strive throughout the year to keep all your plants healthier, pest, and disease free. Applying our custom granular fertilizer 2x a year and our shrub spray throughout the season. It is also important to understand that some buds and blooms are very sensitive to sprays. During this season we pay close attention to this and if a plant has a problem we will carefully determine if it is serious or if it can wait until the blooming season is over. If we do see a problem we will let you know we are aware and what the best option is to keep the plant healthy.

Enjoy your blooming plants throughout Fall and Holiday season.

ST AUGUSTINE

This time of the year your St Augustine should begin to slow down foliage growth and color should improve. Cooler temperatures really make a difference for the color of the grass. Irrigation will play a key role in overall appearance, disease control, and weed control.

Many landscapers will reduce to cutting turf every other week. Do not allow them to cut your grass shorter as this is a common industry practice. This is scalping and it is extremely stressful. With the shorter days meaning less sunlight available the turf needs the foliage so it does not thin out. As importantly a “tight cut” also cuts out all your color, when it should be at its best.

ZOYSIA

This can become a challenging time of the year for Zoysia. Our major concern is Brown Patch Fungus. Prevention is the best approach as Zoysia is slower to recover from disease issues. Also cooler temperatures and excess moisture may result in the Zoysia not having good color. An alternative to retain color in Zoysia is lawn paint. This is truly a beneficial application. Color will hold for 30 to 45 days depending on the growth of the turf. This is also a good time of the year for Zoysia as maintenance issues really slow down but it is still important to maintain an every other week cutting for aesthetics. Edging and weed eating become almost unnecessary but you should still edge one time per month, just to keep the edges sharp and crisp.

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

This is the time of year we are all told to set the irrigation down to 1 time weekly by our municipalities and water conservation groups. Some landscapers, lawn companies, and even irrigation companies will often say the same thing. It is the easiest way out. This always creates issues.

Depending on temperatures, plant material, and conditions at your property this may not be frequent enough. All properties are different and you may know your property better than anyone so reduce to what you feel comfortable with. We have outlined a somewhat effective irrigation program for our seasonal situations. This plan is outside of water restrictions, so it is up to you on setting your frequency. By the time you are reading this letter it will have been approximately 30 days since we last had any significant rainfall. This always makes watering challenging. Supplementing as needed especially under particular conditions will be necessary, especially around large Oak trees as there is a lot of moisture competition. It is also a lot more work keeping up with our containerized plants. Drip irrigation works great in helping keep up with this issue.

Watering regimen for November through March as a standard rule of thumb.

- November – every 5th day to 1 x per week
- December – every 5th day to 1 x per week
- January – 1 x per week
- February – 1 x per week
- March – begin 2 times per week

These frequencies are dependent on daily temperatures. The cooler the season the less frequently water is required. As always if you have any questions please do not hesitate to call for more information and a more specific guide to water your individual property.



Quality First Lawn & Shrub Care, Inc.
PO Box 720475
Orlando, FL 32872

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ORLANDO, FL
PERMIT 1058

REMINDER

Daylight Savings Time!
Time To Resume
Once - A - Week Watering

We Care
407-737-1889

R/O MPS 407-657-7414 QF-NL01 10/15

PLANT TISSUE DAMAGE

When trying to keep something not only alive but thriving it is very important to understand every living organism has a stress threshold. A large Oak will have roots running for hundreds of feet from the trunk. If it is well established, there is very little other than age or natural disaster (lighting for instance) that will kill that huge Oak. On the other side of things turf and many of the ornamentals have a very small or shallow root system. These plants have a much lower tolerance to stress. When we speak about plants everything revolves around a strong, healthy, vigorously growing root system. That being said when one of these plants is damaged the recovery is extremely slow to recover.

A good example is heat stress in Saint Augustine grass. St Aug is pretty resistant to soil that gets dry, a hard freeze, or even most pests and disease. But one hour of stress that exceeds the plants tolerance level can take 4 to 6 months to recover. The parts of the plant that survive the event must first grow a complete new root system. After the roots have grown the plant will begin growing new foliage. Finally the plant will begin to fill back in. It is an extremely slow recovery process. If during the recovery period another stress event occurs the plant has to start all over, taking even longer to recover.

It was a long hot summer. As the temperatures drop the plants will begin to slow down dramatically concerning foliage growth. They do however develop a tremendous amount of new roots during this period. Our treatments will focus on helping the plants grow those new roots setting up for a great growing season in the spring.

NEW TURF AND LANDSCAPE

If you do new plantings this time of the year over watering can cause great damage. In the dead of summer the new plants shallow root system dries out extremely fast. It may even need to be watered 2 times a day. This time of the year it could be 2 or 3 days before the root system dries out. Ideally this time of year new plants should be watered when the soil begins to dry. This requires checking daily and turning the irrigation on when needed. This will only be required for a few weeks and then you will be able to begin a regimen again. The effort will outweigh the irreversible damage of over watering. You are welcome to call our office if you would like more specific advice based on your property and the new plantings you have selected.

REMEMBERING

Being a relationship business, we consider you all family. Over the past couple of months we have lost 2 of our family members. Helene Arost was a wonderful person. Helene loved color in her garden. We did all we could to help her achieve that, and she was very grateful and appreciative. I know Helene is enjoying all the colors with our Lord today. Enjoy your eternal garden, Helene. Victor Woodman was a kind man. Although we did not get to talk often, when we did it was always a pleasure to be able to chat with Victor. I am sure he is appreciating the wonderful garden that he and Susan enjoyed so much. Thank you both for blessing our organization and allowing us to serve and be part of your gardens.