



Owned & Operated by  
Jeff & Debra Melmer

## 10 plants that are natural mosquito repellents:

Citronella

Citronella Grass

Lemon Balm

Marigolds

Catnip

Lavender

Lemon Verbena

Creeping Lemon Thyme

Basil

Rosemary

Most Herbs are natural Mosquito repellents

## WATER...

### A CRUCIAL ELEMENT IN SURVIVAL FOR US AS WELL AS OUR PLANTS.

Understanding water is confusing and frustrating.

Sometimes I feel that we say;

Water, water, water, and then, that is too much water.

It needs more frequency, it is to frequent.

Do not water in the heat of the day, or water at 2-3 PM.

There is no magic formula, no magic wand. No two properties are alike, every month of the year has different weather conditions, and no irrigation system is perfect. If only we could turn it on or off and everything would look the way you want it, everything would be wonderful.

We have been experimenting with different irrigation cycles, run times, and frequencies on select properties. All in an effort to better understand how to improve our efforts to give you the best in turf and shrub care. This has been going on for the better part of my 30 year career and I still find myself continually learning more about water.

Many factors come into play. Soil, the very dirt we grow our plants in. For most of us it is all sand and sand has very poor retention capability. Whether it is water or nutrients it passes through sand quickly. This is why plants dry up so quickly, even after a good rainfall. In the soil grows the root system which is a very critical life sustaining part of the plant. Roots absorb nutrients and water to transfer them throughout the plant so we can enjoy the beauty of the plant. There are many things that can impact the root zone affecting the look and health of the rest of the plant. Improper irrigation has a great deal to do with the health of a root system. Too much water and the root system rots and shuts down making the plant look like it is dry, poor coverage makes the root die from lack of water making the plant look like it is dry. Proper irrigation is usually just the beginning of success or failure. Nematodes, root Compaction, low wet areas, mounds & slopes, berms, swales, shade, full sun, traffic (pets, people, and vehicles), improper mowing, and weed eaters are all affecting a plants root system as well.

Your irrigation system although automatic, does not mean it is perfect. Maintaining your

system insures you can get the water where it needs to be. Calibration is a good tool to better understand your systems abilities and inabilities. Calibration is considered the starting point to an efficient system. In many cases inadequate coverage is covered up by seasonal rains. Irrigating more frequently is not the solution to fixing poor coverage or inadequate volume. It is only a band aid and the poorly covered areas will just redevelop when it stops raining or the temperatures get in the upper 80's plus again. Root development will be very poor in areas that do not get enough water and it is a very slow process for the roots to recover from damage once the system is accurately calibrated again. Some issues are what we consider long term problems. The longer the plant has been without water extends the time it will take to recover. A drought damaged turf after 2 or 3 days of no water or poor coverage can take 3 months or more to recover. How could it take 3 months to recover? In most cases the plant must grow a new root system and that is a slow process.

The last few months have been dry and it is really starting to heat up. We are seeing a lot of heat stress in lawns and shrubs. It is very important to check your irrigation system every change of the season, at a minimum. Just because the system sprays over an area making it damp does not mean it is working properly and that the problem is not the irrigation system. Calibration ensures proper coverage, volume and allows for adjusting zone run times. Heads get out of adjustment, parts wear out, tips get clogged and this happens frequently. If you have an irrigation person be sure to check their work. Turn your system on after a repair to ensure repairs were made. There are a lot of irrigation people that just do not fully comprehend the full scale of what they are doing. (Pressure, flow, coverage, and volume calculations require some complicated math)

We are in the process of developing our own irrigation service. Soon you will have someone you can trust and count on to do service properly for your property. As we get closer to starting up the irrigation division we will inform everyone so you can take advantage of the blending of our service abilities with our irrigation knowledge to take care of your property with optimum results.

#### Here are some tips on how to calibrate your system

Stationary sprays should be set at 30 minutes, rotors should be upwards of 60 minutes. These

times may vary based on your landscape needs, on average this is good formula to start with. If you have calibrated in the past leave your run times as they are to check your system.

Run each zone to insure all the grass is being covered. It is not uncommon to have areas in the lawn that are covered by more than one zone so take good notes on where water stops hitting the ground before you turn on the next zone. Rotors should always have head to head coverage.

After you have ensured your entire property is getting coverage the next step is to measure the amount of water going into the ground. Using rain gauges or even any size round can with a flat bottom you can measure the volume. Your target should

be  $\frac{3}{4}$ th to 1 inch in the can. You can let the system run its total run time or use math to factor a shorter run time and determine total time needed to reach your target.

### **Remember every zone needs to be checked.**

Have a bad spot in the lawn? Set up a can in the not so good looking area and another in a good looking area and compare the water in each can. If you did not get  $\frac{3}{4}$ th inch in both cans you have a volume or coverage issue that will need addressed.

After changes are made to your system always pay a little extra attention to your property for a couple of weeks. Be sure the results are as you expected and also that the changes did not create new problems in other areas. Adjusting heads to better cover an area sometimes results in what was

fine now having a problem. The proverbial "robbing Peter to pay Paul" affect.

Very often a sprinkler head will get replaced or repaired and unknowingly the flow tip is changed to a larger or smaller "gallons per minute" tip. Not all sprinklers are the same but they all will connect to your system. This is a common reason for problem areas in a lawn or shrub bed.

Have you ever thought to yourself "this problem happens every year in this same spot"? About 90% of those spots are related to moisture in the soil. From soil that just dries quickly to hydrophobic soil that will not get wet, the solution is getting more moisture in the soil.

Thank you all for your ongoing trust and patronage of all of our services...**Thank you!**

## TURF

### ST. AUGUSTINE

Mowing height is one of the most important factors for a dense and healthy St. Augustine lawn. The leaf blade is what



gives us our color and photosynthesis that produces food for the plant. Full sun St. Augustine should be cut at  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " during this time of year, by the time we get to July, August, and September you may be up to 4 -  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " depending on your grass type and conditions.

For shaded properties, this becomes even more important as in the shade "reduced sunlight" the more leaf blade the healthier the turf. Seville variety of St. Augustine in the shade can cut as low as  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " but will perform better at about 3". Scalping St. Augustine creates a great deal of stress on our turf. Please remember to check that mowing heights are adjusted as needed. After the spring feeding our St. Augustine turf took off! Giving us a beautiful green, lush appearance. We should be able to maintain this throughout the summer, as all conditions are ideal. Heat stress, drought stress, excessive rain, traffic and scalping can all lead to poor performing turf.

### ZOYSIA

Is very slow to come off the winter dormancy. At this point in time you should be mowing at about 1 -  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ". Maintain Zoysia at this height throughout the next several months. By the time we reach August, you may be cutting at  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 inches. Maximum height would be  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches through the year. Many factors affect Zoysia performance similar to St. Augustine, with the big exception of mowing. The shorter the Zoysia the better it typically looks and performs.



## SERVICE

A lot has happened since our last newsletter. And my, has time gone by quickly!

During the past two months we have been applying the Spring Feeding of your turf and shrubs. This is an especially difficult time of year for us as granular fertilizing is a physically demanding job. However, the results are very rewarding and these applications are the springboard for the upcoming year. A strong and healthy plant is typically a happy plant. But, as summer and the rainy season approach, so comes bug season...

May has now become the beginning of Sod Web Worm season, although we have been finding Sod Web Worm during April as well they really take off in May. Your next turf

application includes our Sod Web Worm prevention treatment and if last 2 year's results are an indicator, which was very little to no Sod Web Worm damage to our turf, this year we expect the same. The last couple of summers have been the quietest Sod Web Worm summers I have ever encountered in my almost 30 year career. This will be our third year using this product. The supplier of the product we use for Sod Web Worm control and prevention said last year we were only 1 of 2 companies in the state that used this product. The other company was in Tampa. We are doing our best to protect your property and take advantage of technology which can be very costly. This is why the other companies do not use this product.

It is also the beginning of Chinch Bug season. From now until late October our technicians are extremely conscientious to ensure Chinch Bugs are managed or controlled so turf damage will not be evident. If Chinch Bugs are found on your property, treatment is made and followed up on to ensure control.

The rainy season typically makes our turf look great, but is also fuel for weed growth. We work diligently to control weeds in your turf, on occasion weeds do get ahead of us, especially during rainy periods. Our technicians note these problems and follow ups are set to ensure weed control is achieved and monitored throughout the rainy season.

# SHRUB CARE

As with most of our conversations, we typically discuss over trimming of our shrubs. While it is a good idea to keep shrubs trimmed and not let them get out of bounds, timely trimming maintains an exact appearance. Frequency in trimming, in some cases weekly, you trim off soft tissue; which is better for the plant and the equipment and it is also less debris to clean-up. Less frequent trimming, every 2 - 3 weeks or monthly, depending on your location, is a lot less stressful for the plant. It may also affect overall appearance; hand clipping is best. The thicker stem can allow you to be more selective in what gets cut; the cleaner the cut, the better the healing process for the plant.

A lot of our trees and shrubs are beginning and ending their blooming cycles. It sure is enjoyable to see blooming trees and shrubs. Throughout the year, good plant selection and placement greatly enhance blooming trees and shrubs throughout the year. As we sit back and enjoy our landscape, we are awash in color throughout the seasons.

## Plants to look for blooming this time of year are:

Gardenias	Roses
Oleander	Confederate Jasmine
Bougainvillea	Lantana
Ixora	Alamanda
Society Garlic	Honeysuckles
Pineapple Guava	Ruellia
Pinwheel Jasmine	Plumbago
Australian Fire Bush	Fire Cracker Plant
Crotons - <b>always colorful!</b>	

## Trees to look for blooming this time of year are:

Mimosa	Tipuana
Jacaranda	Magnolia
Silk Floss	Crepe Myrtle
Royal Poinciana	Bottle Brush

Remember, good cultural practices are what allow us to maintain strong, healthy plants, along with water, sun, shade and fertilizer and proper plant selection for site, proper installation and trimming are all factors involved in the overall health and vigor of your landscape.

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EMAIL THE EDITOR ~ Do you have a question or comment you would like addressed in an upcoming newsletter?  
Send them to [qualityfirst@qfls.co](mailto:qualityfirst@qfls.co)

# MOSQUITO CONTROL

## HOW / WHY DOES A MOSQUITO TREATMENT WORK?

The species of Mosquito most common in our area is a very poor flyer. They can only fly a few feet and then must rest. This difficulty in controlling flight is why you seldom see them on breezy mornings and nights. It is also why they typically rest in areas protected from the wind during the day. These are generally shaded areas. Female Mosquitos produce 30 to 150 eggs about every 2 days. The blood meal is required to nourish the eggs.

When searching for food the mosquito will follow carbon dioxide plumes from anything with lungs. As they near the source of the carbon dioxide they add heat detection to the tracking process. Finally when very close to the target they use sight. Mosquitos are extremely easy to kill with pesticide so very low doses will get results.

When we treat for mosquitos we use a machine designed for the job. We select products that are proven to offer the best control. We add our knowledge of how a mosquito lives and what it needs to thrive. Using a "mist" carried by air we are able to get the product in areas where the mosquito rests. It is applied at a high concentration so it will last longer.

Also through application the product is blocked from the primary things that degrade pesticides which are sunlight and moisture. At the time of treatment virtually every mosquito on your property is dead. As they flutter in from untreated areas they have to rest. As they rest they contact the products and die. So you have a treated zone from the property line to the home.

The first 2 weeks the property will have very few mosquitos. The third week you might see a few. During the 4th week the products come to the end of their life and we return to protect your family and pets for another 30 days. The standard program begins in March and ends in October. Many of our customers get the treatments all year long because they quickly discover how nice it is to sit on the patio in the evening and not have swarms of mosquitos attacking them.

## BITING MIDGE & NON-BITING MIDGE

Non-biting midges are flies that begin life in water. Many of us will call these pest "Blind Mosquitos". They have a similar life cycle and do look somewhat the same as mosquitos, but are very different insects. The midge in the larva stage spends its life in water and is a very important part of the food chain for aquatic animals. Non-biting Midges do not feed on blood but can be a great nuisance. Since they are in the fly family they are very good flyers. You will often see them by the hundreds resting in shaded areas like eaves and porches during the day. At dawn and dusk these insects swarm looking for mates. Because there are so many of them and they are good fliers a mosquito treatment will only offer a couple days relief. This pest generally will have a huge hatch in the spring and then the numbers subside as summer comes on. However there are many species of midge so smaller hatches will occur all through the summer months.

Biting midges are flies as well. Some hatch from the sand and others start life in water. Many of us call these pests No-See-Ums or Sand Fleas / Flies. They are the worst in wooded areas and along waterways. A mosquito treatment will provide very little relief for these pests as well because they are such good flyers.

*continued*



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**May 30, 2016**

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**SCHOOL'S OUT...  
WATCH OUT FOR CHILDREN!**



**MOSQUITO CONTROL** *continued*

While all midges are a great nuisance they do not commonly act as a vector for disease. The best protection against these pests is clothing and repellants.

The color and size of all these pests will vary by species, the general body structure will be the same.



**SAFETY TIP: BE EXTRA CAUTIOUS THIS SUMMER**

While all reported Zika cases so far have been travel related, Miami was ranked #1 and Metro Orlando #2 in the Continental United States for the likelihood of having localized Zika Virus cases this summer. This data came out in April and is based on the number of Chikungunya and Encephalitis cases experienced in the last year. Make sure to do all you can to protect yourself and your children when spending time outside. Extra clothing and mosquito repellants are recommended by the CDC. The CDC also says first trimester pregnant women need to be the most cautious as the virus can affect the fetus.