



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...

### WHO SHUT THE WATER OFF?

It is hard to believe that it is already May. It seems as though 2017 just started and the year is nearly half over. With that being said a lot has happened throughout this year and even dating back to last October, a lot has not happened as well. I am referring to the lack of rain or any real measurable precipitation. Although some have received rainfall, most of us have had none! By the time you read this newsletter it will have been 6 months since we received any measurable rainfall and we are in a 7 to 8 inch rainfall deficit year to date.

What does this mean to us or how does that affect you? On the good side it means we have control of the water. We can be more in control of issues that can adversely affect our landscape by having too much moisture or too much moisture frequency. On the other side it puts a great deal of pressure on our irrigation systems. Coverage is essential! This is the time we know how well or how poor your irrigation system is functioning. We find so many deficiencies and when repairing those issues the lack of rain allows us to see if we actually corrected the problem. Calibration as always is an important factor in ensuring we are maximizing our irrigation abilities to give all of our plant material optimal water for the landscape to thrive. If you have any sort of deficiency it is showing up now.

It takes time for a water deficit to show up. A term we like to use is the "long term effect". This usually applies more to our shrubs and trees. It can take a month for a well-established large plant to show its not getting enough water, in some cases it can take months. This can also give you the idea of how much water these plants actually require, and that in our desire to maintain our landscape, we typically over water the heck out of everything. This cause for excess water and watering frequency is directly related to our grass. Grass requires frequency, this has become fairly obvious during the last few months and especially as we got into late March and early April and the temperatures soared into the upper 80's and even 90's, yikes! It is only April and we are experiencing June temperatures without the benefit or the typical June rains.

There are several options to help us during this dry period. We can start with an inspection of our irrigation system. Turn it on and watch it. Ensure heads are popping up and covering what is intended. Make sure rotors are turning and not blocked by overgrown shrubs, trees, signs, swing sets, vehicles, toys and even grills. Look at your pop up sprays for the same issues. Once you see all is operating then it is time to calibrate to see how much water your system is currently putting out.  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch each watering cycle is optimal. Some situations can require less like shaded or wet areas and some may require more. Now that you have calibrated for how much water you are currently getting adjust the run times on your clock to reach the  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch of water, each time you water.

Another way to get through this dry time is to increase your frequency. I have always followed and believe that every 3rd day is the best watering cycle. I have practiced this for over 2 decades and while I do still get localized dry spots they are rare and I spot water these areas until the seasonal rains begin.

Last year's newsletter was titled "Water a crucial element for us as well as our plants". This can and will be a recurring theme as weather patterns are always changing! Irrigation maintenance is the best advice we can offer (inspect the entire system each time we go through a seasonal change). It is too easy for a small issue to become a major problem and an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

A few items to consider. If you increase your irrigation frequency, this should only be temporary or as needed as this practice can also create a lot of potential problems such as disease and weed growth. It also could be beneficial to only water the affected areas (spot water) of your landscape as this will help those areas and not adversely affect other areas. This can also be a huge savings on the water bill.

### MAKING DRY SOIL WET AGAIN!

When Florida soil gets dry it becomes very hydrophobic. This means it will repel water not allowing it to penetrate. The water will simply flow to the lowest point in that area or it will flow to an area that has not dried out and then soak in. If a spot in your lawn or shrubs has dried out it will take extra water to get it wet again. Just running the irrigation more for small spots can create issues with the rest of the property and can result in a very costly water bill.

The oscillating garden sprinkler that does a side to side arch seems to work the best, another option is the water ring. Both can be purchased at your local garden center or hardware store. These sprinklers water very slowly. It can take 4 to 6 hours to get  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch on the ground when the arch type sprinkler is doing 180 degree coverage. Just keep in mind when doing this, no matter how long the water runs the objective is the volume that gets on the ground. (You get a lot more water out of a fire hose compared to a garden hose when ran the same amount of time, is the analogy I often use.) When you run your irrigation system you have many heads each putting out 2 to 5 gallons per minute. Even at that rate they generally run for nearly an hour. The garden sprinkler is only one sprinkler that is putting out about 0.5 gallon per minute. Do not compare how long your whole property irrigation system runs to the time needed for a slow flowing garden sprinkler. You can even use a rain gauge and let the system run for an hour and see how much water is on the ground and then calculate the time needed for  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch. Lastly, before turning off the water, check the soil in the problem area to make sure it got wet. You should find the first 6 inches of soil moist. If not you will need to water until you get there.

# WATER... continued

A large part of your initial water will run off the hydrophobic soil. This is why slow watering is so critical. Sometimes I will run the sprinkler for an hour and then wait an hour before turning it back on to pre-wet the soil.

Once the soil is wet again your irrigation should

handle the situation as long as the original cause for lack of water has been addressed. If not you might want to watch the area and add extra water at the first sign of wilt so the soil does not get hydrophobic again. Continue this practice until the rains start again.

**WARNING!** When turf is damaged by drought and the stress from just 1 day to long without moisture it can take 6 months to recover if the event does not occur again while it recovers. With St Augustine, all the roots will die and it has to grow a completely new root system making recovery extremely slow.

## TURF

### ST. AUGUSTINE

After our spring feeding our turf really began to pop. Good growth and color is what we strive for. Our St. Augustine turf is usually the easiest to get going. Even with the lack of winter it responded very well to our treatments this spring.



now starting to grow and it is mid-April. In some situations the turf was protected from the cold snap and it has taken off already, but the rest should catch up quickly now. Zoysia is a turf that just does what it wants and pushing it can only result in additional problems.

For those who have had to go through the Zoysia cut down or dethatching can understand how laborious that task is. Some years there is no avoiding this. For most though if the turf is mowed properly throughout the year this should be much easier.

This may be the time to discuss mowing with your landscaper. We can avoid all this labor and cost by maintaining a proper mow height throughout the year. Most landscapers I talk to that say they hate

Zoysia make that statement because they do not know how to take care of it or they are too lazy to adjust their mowers when going from St Augustine to Zoysia.



We had a lot of push back on Zoysia cut downs this year. It is a very labor intensive and it is very messy to say the least. It is also very difficult on the equipment. You can save time, money, and hassles if you will follow our recommendations and please read our newsletter to get seasonal updates on information that applies to that time of year.

### ZOYSIA

Our Zoysia turf can be very slow to start growing in the spring. The cold snap late March really set the Zoysia back. This spring has been challenging as the Zoysia is just

## SERVICE

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.

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 - **always colorful!**

#### 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.

# INSIDE THE HOME PEST CONTROL

## ROACHES AND ANTS

This time of year we get many "occasional invaders". Ants and Roaches being the most common. Many species of small ants (often called sugar ants) in particular have the ability to Budd. Basically when the female workers are cut off from the nest while foraging they will simply start a new colony when one of the workers transforms into a queen. The vast majority of ants do not want to nest in your house but if you spray pesticides you will cut them off from getting out and they will just set up a new home inside. Ants nesting inside can take 3 to 4 times longer to get rid of. If you see ants moving inside we strongly recommend calling your pest control company or us and get them resolved quickly before they have a chance to spread throughout the home.

The large roaches we see this time of year often find entry into the home through areas that are not sealed well. To help keep these unwanted guests and others out, you can look at all entry points into the home during the day. If light is getting in so will roaches and other pests. Doing some simple exclusion will be very helpful in keeping your home pest free.

## MILLIPEDES

Soon the rains will come and along with that will be our annual Millipede invasion. These insects all lay their eggs at about the same time of the year. The egg clutch can consist of hundreds of eggs. They all hatch at about the same time. They grow rapidly and when these pests are about 1 inch long they show up by the 1000's. It is a mass migration as they leave the area they were born and go off looking for new habitat. During these migrations you might find them all over your walks, the street, the house, and even some will get inside the home. Spraying for this pest helps but because it has a very hard exoskeleton and it does not clean itself it can take several hours for them to die after contacting a pesticide. To make matters worse there is a seemingly endless supply of them. After the invasion begins they finally disappear after 4 to 6 weeks. Treating the exterior of the home and doing some exclusion will greatly reduce the ones that get inside. Treating the lawn and shrubs does no good at all. The chemicals are designed to break down quickly and while a spray will kill the ones on your property at that very moment the next day they are replaced by 1000's more as the march continues. Millipedes are extremely frustrating and messy but they do not cause any damage and are not large enough at this point to bite or sting. Once inside even without chemicals they will die on their own because their bodies require high levels of moisture that they cannot find inside a structure.



# 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 flumes 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.

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.



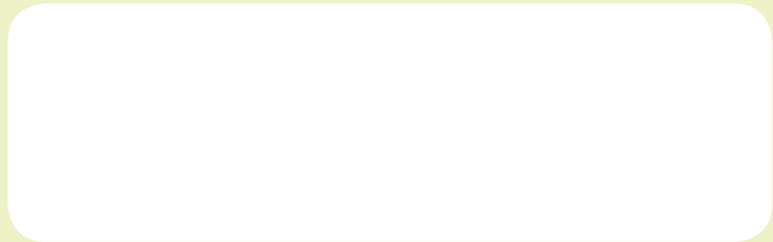
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**SCHOOL'S OUT...  
WATCH OUT FOR CHILDREN!**



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

If you will recall late last summer into the fall we had many cases of Zika virus transmitted by Mosquitos here in the US. The major hot spots being in Miami. It is very unlikely all those mosquitos carrying the virus have died. It is a simple matter that there are less mosquitos and we wear more clothing in the cooler months. Fewer to no issues and we stop seeing the alarming news reports. The only thing safe about Zika is to predict we will hear more about Zika this 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. You can locate more information at the Center for Disease Control "CDC" website.*

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