



Owned & Operated by
Jeff & Debra Melmer

MESSAGE FROM *Jeff* SEASONAL CHANGES????

Did we miss winter? Not that I am complaining, but it is nice to get some cooler temperatures to allow our plants, shrubs, and trees some down time. This is the season where normally our plants can rest and rejuvenate and get prepared for the spring growing season. The warm winter allowed the plants to continue growing, using up more nutrients from the soil. The landscape will respond very well with our spring fertilizing.

November started out a little cool which affected our Zoysia turf grass the most, much of it lost its color. It was a good month due to the fact we had limited rainfall and saw very little disease issue (Brown Patch Fungus) flare ups.

December and January rolled in with some exceptionally warm temperatures. This was good for our tourists and those of us that prefer the warmer weather and it was also good for our turf grass. Especially our St Augustine lawns began to grow and get nice color. Even some of our Zoysia lawns began to grow and green up but Zoysia grass sort of does what it wants this time of the year. And if we try to push it we end up with more disease and weed issues. This is why we typically do not see naturally green Zoysia in the winter. Some companies will paint the lawns and charge every customer for the work to keep the Zoysia green. We can do this as well but depending on the size of your property it can be expensive. Painting season is over but next year if you are interested in having your Zoysia painted, just contact us in late October and we will quote this work for you. Winter painting does not help or damage Zoysia but does hide the natural browning resulting from slow growth.

Turf disease also began to flare up due to the warmer weather, but by late January we had the majority of these issues cleared up. Now that we are well into February we would prefer not to see any real cold weather as our turf and plants are beginning to grow again. Any real cold temperatures like a frost or freeze will be very damaging to all that new growth and can really set the plant back and drastically affecting our spring green up by as much as 3 to 4 weeks.

One issue we will encounter this spring due to our above average temperatures is that our blooming cycle for our trees and shrubs will be off. Our camellias did not bloom well as it just did not get cool enough at the time they needed it. Our azaleas have been well into their blooming cycle and our trees are early as well.

As we look to March our irrigation schedule will change. Daylight savings time allows us to increase to 2 times a week when needed. Temperatures may dictate the need to increase the frequency sooner. Our recommendation is to go to every 4th day for the month of March, then to every 3rd day April through May or until the rainy season starts. By then the May addition of our newsletter will be out to further discuss irrigation practices for the summer months.

Our landscapers have had a little more difficult season. Normally they go to an every other week cutting in November, this year they have continued to cut weekly through November and December so there has not been much of a break for them.

As we start to look ahead to the spring we will have many projects to plan. As always this Spring Newsletter issue has our recommendations to help plan for the "Spring Clean Up". This is a great time of the year with warm temperatures and the days getting longer. Very soon we will be setting our clocks ahead to get a little more time at the end of the day to enjoy the outdoors. We will be able to enjoy the rejuvenation of our plants. It is always a joy to see all the fresh new growth and the blooming season for many of our plants such as Azalea, Gardenia, and Magnolia to name a few.

Some not so enjoyable yet vital to plant health issues for this time of year is the leaf dropping many plants and trees go through along with the dreaded pollen season. This makes it a messy and difficult time of the year for those of us with allergies. Fortunately this all passes quickly.

There is one issue during leaf drop season that is a concern, our leaf blowers. Yes we want to keep the leaves cleaned up but it does come with an expense. Blowers pushing air at 140 plus mph can be damaging if we are trying to keep every leaf that falls off our property. The damage comes from dehydration of the plants and turf which will result in new growth damage, browning out, and even thinning. The constant blowing off can also shred plants **ESPECIALLY your Mondo Grass** and others such as Bromeliads, Cast Iron, Philodendron, Tricolor Ginger, Ferns in general, and the other tender plants. So please discuss with your landscapers that there are other options for leaf cleanup such as vacuums and or raking. Make sure if raking they use the flexible plastic headed rake to reduce damage and do not pull too hard on your St Augustine as you may pull it out of the ground.

We have made a few updates to our Zoysia cut down procedures. Please review this information and if you have any questions please contact our office for further consultation.

EMAIL THE EDITOR - Do you have a question or comment you would like addressed in an upcoming newsletter? Send them to qualityfirst@qfls.co

SPRING TRIMMING

In this edition we will try to cover all plants that should or need to be cut back; plants that may need some extra trimming or plants that may not need any extra work at all. As a rule you should not cut more than 1/3 of the plant, but if needed, cut as far back as you feel necessary.

We sort of depend on the cold weather (frost or freeze) to force us into trimming plant material back; when it does not get that cold it makes it more difficult to trim back a seemingly healthy, good looking plant. If not done at this time, by late Summer it is overgrown and we are in a position of leave it, or trim it and hope it recovers from the stress.

Spring is the best season to accomplish all your extra yard work. Its cooler, the heat and the humidity are not present to stress out your plants. Spring is the time of year we get our best flush of new growth and your plants will regrow quickly. In some instances it gives us a whole growing season for plants to recover to desired levels.

We will try to list plants that require or are in need of an annual cut back. **Plants that need cutting back annually...in no particular order:**

Fire Cracker Plant	Plumbago	Jatropha	Oleanders
Pinwheel Jasmine	Dwarf Liriope	Ruellia	Flax Lily
Cordylone (Hawaiian Ti Plants)		Australian Fire Bush	

Plants that may need to be cut back due to being overgrown for their location or they just look messy or unkempt...again, in no particular order:

Coontie Ferns	Cardboard Palms	Liriope	Hollies
Hibiscus	Nandina	Snow Plants	Ixora
Criminum Lilies	Crotons	Camelias	Eugenias
Duranta	Boxwoods	Mondo Grass	Loropetalum
Trinetts	Sago Palms	Loropetalum	
Large Leaf Philodendrons	Shell Ginger (other Ginger varieties as well)		

Ground Covers: Jasmine

Plants that may need to be cut back...once the blooming cycle is over:

Gardenias	Knock Out Roses	Drift Roses	Formosa Azaleas
Angel Wing Jasmine	Downey Jasmine	Indian Hawthorne	Camelias

If you have larger plants that require cut down, such as Ligustrum Trees, Large Viburnum Hedges, Podocarpus, Larger Hollies (such as Nellie Stevens), Marynell, Oak Leaf, Luster Leaf Holly, Eggleston Holly or larger Camelias, It is the time of year to get this done. The aggressive trimming now will reduce the trimming needed through the year. When they are cut back now you will be able to do more selective trimming with hand shears. This will reduce the stress created by constant shearing, it will reduce excessive shoot growth and will improve overall health vigor and appearance of these specimen plants. This will reduce maintenance time, your landscaper's time or the time you spend laboring in your garden. Large hedges often get thin at the bottom. This usually is a result of the top shading the bottom. Cutting so the plant is about 25% more narrow at the top will usually help fill the bottom back in. Aggressive trimming now will only leave the plant looking bad for a few weeks and the reward will last the rest of the year.

Juniper is a plant that does not like a lot of trimming; be selective and try to avoid shearing if a Juniper has grown too large. You can try trimming, but you may have to pull it out and start over.



Many palms may need a cleanup of their browned fronds and seed pods, please minimize this trimming. It is better (healthier) for a palm to be full, a canopy of 180°–270° is ideal. Anything above 180° is very stressful and quite honestly just looks horrible, NEVER hurricane cut a palm. When a palm dies we ask why? Many environmental stresses are already in place: moisture, location and over trimming just adds stress that can put a palm over the edge.

Over the past year we have communicated about the excessive trimming done on our landscapes. Many of you have paid heed to our advice and our landscape plants look much better over the past year; healthier, denser, less yellowing, less constant shearing and less stress. Ligustrum trees are still our number one concern. Hollies, Boxwoods and Podocarpus have all shown a better look without all the trimming.

IRRIGATION REPAIRS

The more I go through irrigation systems the more I realize that we look at the theory aspect of the way it should be, then we get to the practical which is how it has been repaired in the past and find the theory and actual are pretty far apart. In many situations you replace, move, add or reduce irrigation heads, change zone run times and frequency but it ends up being a patch job or only part of what needs to be done. When repairs are made there are many scenarios and factors that have to be considered. When it is complete the final question is, are you sure the problem is resolved? Sometimes it is a wait and see if a problem is truly resolved. Seasonally you make all the necessary changes and all looks good. Then summer hits and it is the same issues all over again. This is where an irrigation maintenance program really becomes our best asset. When we are able to inspect, tweak and even modify the system this allows us more opportunity to correct deficiencies.

I have always believed that we over water almost all of our shrub and tree material because we have been conditioned to do so. The turf will always require more water frequency than the shrubs but the irrigation systems are always set up for the whole property. In some cases a shrub zone plays a key role in keeping an area of turf watered properly. After a recent visit to Arizona I reaffirmed my belief in our over watering of all plants. I found many of the same plants we have here in Florida but they seldom are watered because there is none. The root system on these plants has been conditioned for the environment and is massive allowing the plant to find water. The big difference is we have grass and to survive it has to be watered. In some instances we also have tropical plants that require more water. However the vast majority of our shrubs and trees would do better with less.

Another area that is constantly changing is drip irrigation. This is far from infallible. Drip irrigation is about frequency. The most common

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IRRIGATION REPAIRS *(Cont. from page 2)*

use of drip irrigation is in our containerized / potted plants. Most of the drip irrigation I see is attached to an irrigation zone. Trying to water potted plants 1 or 2 times per week is not enough most of the year. We also see mainly one type of head used and a lot of them have the head blown off due to the water pressure being too high. Establishing a separate zone or running a battery operated timer is best for this situation. It gives you control of the water and frequency. Drip irrigation also requires more frequency of inspection, we often only check the system when a plant is dying or dead. We typically find the line cut or pulled out of the container accidentally.

As I stated in the past and always communicate to my office staff, technicians, and homeowners. Whenever you make a change to your irrigation whether it be a repair or a change in frequency, always monitor the results for about 7 to 10 days to insure the change is effective. This time frame will typically allow you to know if all is good or if further work will be required. And as always if you have any questions regarding irrigation / drip irrigation please do not hesitate to contact us for further counseling.

ZIKA VIRUS

2016 brought the United States the Zika Virus. At one point toward the end of the year Mosquitos carrying the virus showed up in south Florida. Over the cooler months there has been less activity and the issue faded from the news. It is almost a certainty that the virus will show up again this summer. It is still out there along with all the other mosquito carried diseases.

Zika Virus is carried by the mosquito *Aedes Aegypti* which is a common mosquito in Florida. Protective measures recommended at this time are repellants and clothing to cover the skin. Many municipalities have instituted reduction programs for public areas. This helps but does not reduce the population on your property.

Common symptoms are joint pain, fever, rash, and red eyes. Cases have been reported in 7 counties in Florida across southern and central Florida.

Our mosquito program does work at reducing populations on your property but please be sure to include personal protection products when you go outside.



TIME CHANGE

Sunday March 12th is the day your clocks will "spring ahead". This is also the time when most areas will be allowed to start adding additional water on your plants and turf. Be sure to allow the weather conditions to dictate as to the need for increased watering. March and April can be rainy months so it is best to determine the need of watering by watching the plants. If they are showing signs of wilt extra water will be needed.

ZOYSIA TURF



It has been a very good season for Zoysia grass. With the warmer temperatures and lack of frost we did not have to endure a brown lawn for several months, which has made this a very satisfying season. Now that spring is just around the corner it is time to discuss and plan our Zoysia turf cut down.

ZOYSIA GRASS CUT DOWN

Every spring we discuss cutting our Zoysia by doing a "Cut Down" or "Buzz Cut". A cut down is the process of cutting the grass extremely low. You will remove most all that is green and some of the decaying material from last year's growth and the natural winter decline. In the past years we have worked to fine tune our service programs to avoid this labor intensive and messy project. Most lawns will only need what is called a buzz cut. This is a tight cut with a goal of 1 to 1.5 inches. The primary reason for this is to reduce thatch buildup. This also shortens the grass to allow for a seasonal growth spurt that will affect the appearance of the lawn all year.

When you cut Zoysia this close, the lawn will be mostly brown. It will look like the lawn will die. You are truly scalping the lawn on purpose. Because it will look so bad and many landscapers just do

not understand it is a critical part of caring for Zoysia we have found it extremely difficult to get them to cut the way it should be done. Assure them you know they will cut all the green away leaving very little behind except runners. It will recover in a few weeks and if the lawn had not been mowed at the correct height in the past this is the only time of year and way to get rid of that "Shaggy" look. Just like a bad haircut it will grow back. Do not assume your landscaper knows this needs to be done. Many simply do not understand how important this is. If it does not get done in the spring the look of your lawn will suffer.

Many of you will not be required to do a cut down or buzz cut but for those that do we have some changes in your watering program that should help to expedite the "grow in" of your Zoysia.

For those lawns that need a buzz cut or a complete cut down watering after the process should be done as though the lawn was a new install. Water every day for 10 minutes per zone. Practice this for 7 to 10 days or until you see green grass beginning to grow again. Then reduce the watering to your normal frequency. The cut down is extremely stressful and keeping the stems and runners moist during the recovery is critical. We have found in this situation a daily short watering is the best way to ward off additional damage.

This extra watering may generate more weed growth but we will work diligently to correct this as soon as the turf is strong enough to handle herbicides.

Temperatures will also play a key role in how quickly the lawn recovers. Zoysia grows extremely slow in cool weather. We recommend waiting to do your cut down or buzz cut until the overnight temperatures are averaging 70 degrees. The forecast is that March temperatures will be about average to slightly above average. You may want to plan your cut down for around mid-March.

When doing a cut down or a buzz cut we do recommend that you bag the grass that is removed. There will be a lot of material removed and leaving it on the ground will smother the grass resulting in excessive damage.

March is when we do the granular spring feeding. We would prefer to fertilize after the cut down or buzz cut is completed. We will do our best to communicate with all our Zoysia customers prior to doing your granular fertilization application. If you have any questions or concerns please call our office or if you rather we can schedule a consultation.

St Augustine Turf

With the exception of some fungus and a few weeds our St. Augustine had a good winter. There was very little cool weather damage to most properties and with the spring granular fertilization we should see the grass take off and be what is expected. Good green color, good density, and minimal weed issues.



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Subterranean termites are the type of termite most likely to attack your home. All subterranean termites are social insects that nest in large, underground colonies. There can be millions of termites in a colony, but you may never see any evidence of them, until a pest professional or you the homeowner discover they've seriously damaged your home.

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Remember, only a pest professional can keep your home termite free with TERMIDOR. With a pest professional and America's #1 termite defense working together to protect your home, termites will be the last thing on your mind.

