



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

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REMINDER

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

We Care
407-737-1889

R/O MPS 407-657-7414 QF-NL01 10/16

NEW TURF AND LANDSCAPE



If you do install new turf this time of the year over watering can cause great damage. In the dead of summer the new turf's 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 new turf 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 turf you have selected.

Please be careful when installing new trees and shrubs. It seems the growers are using potting material that is courser than we have seen in years past. This is done so nutrients and moisture can be controlled to speed up the growth of the plants while in the nursery. Make sure the root balls are broken up and try to mix a little loose soil from the planting area into the root ball. We have seen many plants die from drought even though the soil is wet in the bed, the root ball has dried out. Hand watering the base of the trunk 1 time per week for the first month will help insure you do not have a water problem. It is also critical to not install plants too deep. The root flares should be at grade or even a little above grade. You can install a plant too shallow with very little adverse effect. If you install plants even 1/2 inch too deep everything from poor general health, lack of blooming, to premature death will be the result. A simple rule is all trunk bark and root flares should be exposed and above grade when you finish installing a plant. Properly installed mulch is not an issue, just make sure no dirt is covering the areas mentioned.

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

Some of the information in our newsletter may be repetitive throughout the year.

As things change from season to season and year to year we come across these issues as they repeat themselves. With respect to all our long term customers it is good to refresh our memories from season to season but also to let all of our new customers in on the information.



Owned & Operated by
Jeff & Debra Melmer

VOICE OF QUALITY

NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2016

A MESSAGE FROM

Jeff

As I wrote in our last newsletter, this was one of the hottest summers I can remember. June started out fairly normal and wet. Then came July, we had 47 straight days of 90 plus degrees and for a large percent of the month the heat index was in excess of 100 degrees. These temperatures were extremely brutal on our plants and turf. We had air conditioning to escape to, but our turf and plants had no form of relief in these conditions.

As summer went on we began to see the stress from the heat showing up on everything. Heat stress can be very damaging especially when it comes to your turf. It does not take much for the small leaf blades to dry out and wilt, turn brown, begin to, and then end up dying. Some of these turf issues are augmented by poor root development. We spent the better part of this year trying to understand why some properties did not have a strong root system. From there it became, how do we promote a better root system so plants can handle stress better? We have found the majority of these issues are directly related to water. To be specific it is irrigation coverage issues.

Poor coverage means very little moisture is penetrating into the root zone. Thus not providing the plant the moisture it requires to develop. Would you want to go into an area where there is no moisture? This is when calibration is the key to success. Achieving $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch of water per application evenly throughout the property. In many situations this can be very difficult to achieve as irrigation systems are not always as infallible as we may want to think.

When builders install an irrigation system it is well known they are doing it in the most economical manner possible. It is extremely common for them to go to the very limit of the system's ability leaving no room for changes in the future. It is also installed based on the plants and turf that is used. Then changes on the property begin. Adding or moving plants, plants grow, maybe we don't give the irrigation the maintenance it needs, even the number of houses taxing the water pressure changes. Very quickly most systems have no room to be adjusted so major alterations become needed to correct these deficiencies. Relying on your irrigation guy may not always be in your best interest. Getting into the irrigation business does not require licensing or proof of knowledge unless the company is installing new systems. Most times the irrigation person worked for a company for a short period of time and then goes out and does a start-up. This results in lack of knowledge or skills to be able to understand and do, what needs to be done.

This is why we started Quality First Precision Water Works. With our knowledge of plant material and specific plant water needs we have the ability and skill to impact your irrigation system in a positive manner. In some cases we have already dealt with we even reduced the water usage by calibrating the system. Taking water from plants and areas that have been getting too much and putting the water in areas that need it. Ultimately reducing the water bill! Another reason we have been finding poor root systems has been directly related to over watering. Constant watering and not allowing the soil to dry out a little results in a lazy root system and even disease issues. During the summer when it is raining we do lose control! But we can control the irrigation, so it does not add to the problem. A rain gauge allows you to turn the system off when you know we are getting ample rainfall. A Rain Sensor can be your best friend if it is operational and maintained. The new rain sensors have come a long way. They work much better and last much longer than what we had to use just 4 or 5 years ago. It is also mandatory that all automatic systems have a working rain sensor.

With all that being said, we have diligently worked to develop a nutritional program in conjunction with fungicides to develop, build, protect, and maintain our turfs root system for it to be a stronger plant and a better product on the ground.

As August began the rains slowly came back and we got very wet again. This is when we began to notice different issues developing. We found heat stress on our plants. Plants like Bromeliad, Agapanthus, and Mondo Grass began to yellow, wilt, and in some cases died. Camelia and Azalea really suffered from sun scorch. We also started discovering dry root zones in some of our more established plants like Ligustrum, Viburnum, and other large trees. As each case is different we could discuss a long list as to why, but it is better to isolate the lack of water cause and then work to a resolution.

September has come and gone and our fall turf fertilization has been applied setting our properties up for the next change of season. We are getting into the time of year that disease will begin to show up. Correcting disease issues is very difficult this time of year because the foliage growth slows down. So recovery is slow. We ask that you please help us ensure your turf and shrubs look their best through good water management practices.

I have outlined what I feel is a very reliable watering plan for this time of the year. Please review this information and if you have any questions do not hesitate to ask your technician for more specific watering instructions for your property or contact our office and we will communicate with you directly.

NOVEMBER

This is the time of year we see the most evidence of transition as far as seasonal changes are concerned. Shaded properties seem to show the most change, while full sun properties see very little change. This is largely due to the sunshine allowing for plants to dry out somewhat. Water / Moisture is what gives fuel to disease. There are many varieties of disease and not many control measures. Our best defense is sound cultural practices. Proper mowing, fertilization, insect control, and irrigation practices enable us to manage disease without having to use fungicides. Over use of Fungicides can lead to resistance buildup, making the fungicide ineffective. We are limited on good broad spectrum fungicides so it is important that we use them judiciously. We must know what disease we are dealing with and why it has shown up. This allows us to select the proper fungicides and in some cases recommend changes that will reduce the likelihood of the disease returning.

Correct identification of the disease, utilization of the proper fungicide, and proper application methods, will help ensure a successful recovery.

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

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



DISEASE SEASON IS HERE!

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 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 areas require even less. These areas likely will only need water one time per week.

Some control clocks can be set so you do water more in the sunny areas and less in shady wet areas.

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.

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 they 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 mosquitoes 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!

LESSONS WITH

Lynn

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, Jatropha, 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 The Holiday season.

LEAF DROP SEASON

This is the beginning of leaf drop season. As a reminder leaf blowers do cause a lot of damage to tender plant tissue. With the recent hurricane Matthew you can see the power of wind. It was a Category 4 with winds of 140 mph. This is the same speed the air comes out of an average leaf blower. It is ok to have some leaves on the ground in your shrub beds. The blower shreds and desiccates leaf tissue severely affecting the aesthetics of your plants. Please talk with your landscaper so they take the time to watch what and where they are blowing. Blowers are usually the suspect if your mulch disappears during the year. Look under and behind your plants, it is probably piled up against the plant trunk and walls of your home. These piles should be cleaned and leveled back out as too much leaf litter can affect nutritional and fungicide treatments and also may block moisture from reaching the ground in the root zone.

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 WATERING

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.