

VOICE OF QUALITY

NEWSLETTER - SUMMER - 2016 - 2nd Edition



Owned & Operated by
Jeff & Debra Melmer

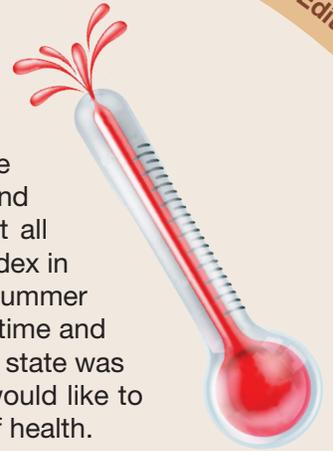
SUMMER 2016

I hope this newsletter finds you all well!

May was a good month concerning the weather conditions. Not many issues or problems were present. The rains came later but not as frequent. June gave us some good rain and our turf and shrubs responded very nicely. July is where it all changed. It got so HOT and it stayed HOT!!! With the heat index in the triple digits for most of the month. I only remember one summer we dealt with this type heat for such an extended period of time and that was back in 1998. If you remember it seemed the whole state was on fire. With that being said our turf is the primary topic I would like to discuss. Water and water frequency is an integral part of turf health.

Hot spots, heat stress, dry spots. So many factors involved and very few properties are going to have the same situations or issues. Please read through this newsletter carefully as we will discuss these issues separately.

Jeff Melmer



IRRIGATION

There are many questions regarding irrigation. Irrigation frequency? What time is best to water? Should I water in the middle of the day? Won't that burn the grass? Does it evaporate?

We often hear; "we get tons of rain", "it could not be water with all the rain", "my irrigation guy said it is getting plenty of water it must be bugs or disease". These are all legitimate statements, but are they correct? In some cases yes, but how much water is a ton of rain? Your technicians, I, and our office staff communicate as much as we can about monitoring rain fall. A simple rain gauge is all you need so you know exactly how much rain you received at your property. 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch is only good for one day. How quickly the moisture in the soil evaporates could be easily related to how quickly we dehydrate in this extreme heat. At least we can get a bottle of water, your turf just lays there suffering, unable to move to the shade or turn on the water.

Please understand that we all receive varying amounts of rain on a daily basis. The rain gauge is a valuable tool in understanding water, water needs, and water requirements to sustain a healthy landscape and in many cases saving us money on our water bill.

You should never water established plant material more than 3 times weekly. If you have to water more than that to sustain your turf then you have a coverage or volume issue. Anyone that waters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 days a week continuously is setting themselves up for failure, especially with turf. By the time you notice the ill effects of overwatering it is too late and we are now in a recovery mode. The damage done to the plant and its root system may take up to 90 days to recover.

In some cases a short watering in the afternoon is ok. Hydrating the plant under extreme heat can reduce the damage from extended stress and saves work on everyone's part. Ten to fifteen minutes of water hydrates the plant at its most stressful time. This is a short term solution and should not be practiced daily. Ongoing or continuing to water mid-day will lead to many disease issues in your landscape.



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SHRUB CARE

There are always challenges when it comes to shrubs. They do tolerate a lot more stress than what our turf does. The rainy season can wreak havoc as too much water is not always a good thing. Some plants prefer wet soil some prefer dry conditions. Matching the plants to the moisture conditions will lead to less maintenance and a healthier landscape.

We get a lot of questions on trimming shrubs. How much to cut, when is the right time and how to cut different plants? A lot is dependent on the shrub. This time of year with the issues of heat, major pruning can be very stressful and minor pruning can even cause problems for some plants. By this time of year any major pruning should be completed. We do not have that much growing season left for plants to fully recover. Good results from pruning are very dependent on the time of year / timing. If you must do pruning this time of year, get it done as soon as possible and consult with us if in need of advice. A great source to gain knowledge of a particular plant is the University of Florida website. Go to IFAS.com and then use the search bar for what you are looking for.

On the other hand many plants do need minor pruning, so that they are not so overgrown by late fall. Some plants that will perform better later this fall if trimmed this time of year in no particular order, Snow plant, Knock Out roses, Hawthorne, Trinetts, Crotons, Plumbago, Pinwheel Jasmine, Dwarf Azaleas, Poinsettia and Hydrangeas are just a few that can receive minor trimming. Even your Crepe Myrtle could use a little clean up to keep blooms going well into September. The following plants should not receive much if any pruning at this time of year; Formosa Azaleas, Viburnum, Ligustrum, and Jasmines.

ZIKA VIRUS

It is all over the news that Zika has become a disease that is now transmitted by the mosquito in the United States. The first positive case was found in North Miami at the end of July. From everything I have studied the highest risk of life threatening danger is for the very young, the elderly, and before and during pregnancy. The young and old may suffer symptoms like the flu and like the flu this includes high fevers. The issues around pregnancy changes too fast to keep up with. The CDC released information at the end of July that the male needs to be careful 6 months after infection and a female 3 months before and 3 months after a pregnancy begins. You can learn more on the "CDC" Center for Disease Control web site or by speaking with your physician. I strongly recommend seeking your information from the most reliable sources to avoid bad information.

- For many that are infected there will be no symptoms, for others it will be varying degrees of flu like symptoms. This makes knowing if you have been infected extremely difficult without testing.
- Do all you can to protect yourself and family members from Mosquito bites. Shirts with long sleeves and pants from dusk to daybreak and repellent sprays are recommended.
- Never forget that mosquitos are always around.
- While they will be everywhere between sunset and sunrise they are active in shaded areas during the day. (thetwoods, your shrubs, under trees & canopies, and anyplace there is shade)
- We have reached the point that you might want to have a can of mosquito repellent at every exit door of the house and in the car, so it is always at hand to keep up with the kids.



We are not pushing (I don't like using this forum to sell a service) but I do want to be sure all our customers realize that we do offer a Mosquito Control Program. There is no way to eliminate all risks when it concerns a flying insect. You can however rest assured we will do all we can to reduce the population around your property, giving you a buffer in your back lawn. Pricing is based on coverage area but an average size property (back yard and sides) runs around \$60.00 per month. If you are interested we can quote your property over the phone. Lynn Briggs

To see the latest information shared with Pest Control Professionals you can use this link (www.pctonline.com/article/zika-olympics-cdc/) to visit "PCT" Pest Control Technology online. Save it in your favorites and you will see weekly updates sent out on Tuesday each week by clicking "News" then "Latest".

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

SERVICE CHALLENGE

I believe we have one of the most difficult and challenging jobs in the landscape profession.

You may ask, why that is.

We have to deal with a lot of controllable and non-controllable issues. While the non-controllable are few, they have a huge impact on results. The level of expectation by a customer is that everything for the most part is always what they expect it to be. On most properties that is what we achieve, some never seem to have a problem, but some it seems have constant problems.

The controllable factors are mowing, weed eating, trimming, irrigation, insect control, disease control, nutritional needs, and weed control.

The non-controllable – The weather! Inconsistent weather patterns wreak havoc on our landscapes. This is what leads to all the questions about irrigation. Most recently for example the heat has been relentless to say the least. The smallest imperfections of an irrigation system show up as big issues. The major imperfections well are just dramatic.

Dealing with all the issues that go on in our landscapes, again is challenging. Our job is to make and keep your landscapes looking their best. Controlling bugs and disease, knowing when to add fertilizer. These things for a company with our experience are relatively easier to manage. Maintaining our landscape in what we call poor “cultural conditions” is where we have to work the hardest! Communication is a big part of helping the customer know what real expectations should be, and is critical. Understanding what is happening and then taking action to correct the cultural issue is where it can get very difficult. Cultural issues are different on every property. We all have what are called “micro climates” in our landscape. Micro climates include areas of the property that are extraordinarily wet , or dry, or in too much shade, have full sun, have steep grades or slopes, low or high pH, nematodes, and mowing, weed eating, trimming habits are all affected by micro climates. Understanding these issues helps us greatly in ensuring that we do our best to keep everything looking satisfactory throughout the year.

Having been in this industry and being exposed to many companies I have to recognize the people at Quality First that deal with these challenges. The people that work at learning all that is required to understand how to diagnose the problem and do our best to address it.

I would like to say thank you to all of our staff at Quality First. To our front line office staff, they do a wonderful job of communicating with you the customer and then with us that come to meet your expectations. And our lawn technicians, these guys have an extremely physically demanding job and requires them to intelligently deal with every issue they come across. They are constantly dealing with all the extremes we could possible go through.

Thank You ALL for all you do!

MOWING - ST AUGUSTINE

This is the time of year that our St. Augustine grass can be put under a great deal of stress. There are a lot of issues involved as you can see from my opening article. Mowing height is critical for St. Augustine. At this time of year your grass is growing vertically, it is standing straight up. Your mowing height should be adjusted to compensate for this. Most St. Augustine grass should be cut at a minimum of 3-½ inches during most of the year. However, this time of the year through October you should be mowing at 4 to 4-½ inches. This ensures optimal appearance, health and color are maintained. Cutting to short puts a great deal of stress on your turf. It can weaken the plant, bugs sense stress (So do yourself a favor- raise your mowing height, talk to your landscaper and get them to raise their mower.)

With the excessive heat that we have been going through, scalping or cutting the lawn to short likely will result in the loss of turf rapidly. At this time of the year getting the turf to recover from any type damage is difficult due to the growing season getting shorter.

Shaded St. Augustine benefits from a higher cut all year long so there will be more leaf blades to absorb light needed for photosynthesis, this will also aid in retaining turf density for this time of year.

Zoysia, a wonderful grass if you like shorter turf. Zoysia prefers a shorter cut and it looks best at 1½ – 2 inches.





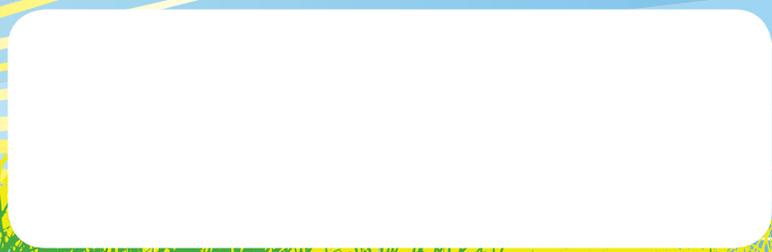
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YARD SIGN

When you see our yard sign in your lawn we are fulfilling a state requirement to notify the public of a chemical application. Something that we do to take informing a step further is to add a place for the service date and a list of application details. They are listed under LAWN CARE and SHRUB CARE. Should you be a “don’t leave anything at the door” customer or even just want to know at a glance what and when we did a treatment to your property you will find that information on the lawn sign... We just wanted to bring this added information to your attention.



407-737-1889 • We Care!