



Owned & Operated by
Jeff & Debra Melmer

IS IT SPRING YET?

I hope by the time you read this it will be what we here in Florida consider Spring. I personally believe we only have 3 seasons in our area: Spring, Summer and Fall and I personally do not like Winter... I hate being cold! So, as our northern neighbors have endured some extremely cold temperatures, we have enjoyed yet another mild cool season. I, without doubt was not complaining when it was 80° in December, but January brought in some much cooler days and nights.

How does the warmer weather impact our landscapes? With warmer temperatures plants continue to grow and in some cases they grow to a point of having to continually keep up with trimming. It is good to have cooler temperatures to help slow everything down; it is actually good to get some down time. These warmer temperatures also throw plants off schedule; leaf drop and blooming are affected by this, blooming early, late or in many cases not blooming much at all.

This gets us to this time of year... "Spring clean up"; it's the time of year to get caught up on cutting plants back and down. Cleaning up all the excess leaf liter, which gets piled up under shrubs all year long. Transplanting plants, adding new plants to the landscape, mulching, resodding all the things we put off because it was too hot, we are either too busy, it's too much rain or it is the Holidays!

SPRING TRIMMING

In this edition we will try to cover all plants that should be 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 is necessary.

We sort of depend on cold weather (frost or light 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 so overgrown and we are put in a position of leave it, or trim it and hope it recovers from the stress.

Spring is the best season to accomplish all of your extra yard work. Its cooler, the heat and humidity are not present to stress out your plants. Spring is the time 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 down. Plants that may need some cut down and cut downs that are needed based on your landscape needs.

Plants that need cutting down annually...in no particular order:

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

The following list of plants may need cut down or cut down what is overgrown for its location or just looks messy or unkempt...again in no particular order:

Coontie Ferns	Cardboard Palms	Liriope	Hollies	Hibiscus	Nandina
Snow Plants	Crimnum Lilies	Crotons	Camelias	Ixora	Duranta
Boxwoods	Mondo Grass	Lantana	Trinetts	Sago Palms	Eugenias
Loropetalum	Large Leaf Philodendrons				
Ground Covers: Jasmine	Shell Ginger (other Ginger varieties too)				

(Cont. on page 2)

TID BIT

Homeowners beware termite swarm season is approaching!

Spring is around the corner and that means warmer weather; for many areas it also means termite swarm season.

Subterranean termites are the most common species of termites across the United States and are found in every state except Alaska. No matter how your home is constructed, where it is located or how old it is, it could be attacked by subterranean termites. They cause \$4-5 billion in damage each year in the U.S. alone. They are, in fact, the most serious threat your home may face.

Only a certified pest management professional can perform a thorough termite inspection...the first step toward termite control. If the inspection reveals that you have termites or conditions that are conducive for subterranean termites, we will recommend a treatment plan that will do away with them or prevent them.



MINUTE WITH

Mike



Greetings to all of our Friends & Family of Quality First Lawn, Shrub & Home Services.

First, let me start out by welcoming the newest member of our family, Loretta Merchant. Loretta has replaced Tiffany Treat as Routing/Production Administrator for our indoor pest & termite company, Quality First Home Services.

Tiffany and her family have moved to the Tampa/St. Pete area; she will be missed. Loretta is a dynamic addition to our Customer Service team, with over 10 years experience. Please help me in welcoming her to the family!

I'd also like to give a shout out to Michele Criddle, our Accountant. Michele has achieved her MBA! Quite an accomplishment Michele and congratulations are well deserved! Michele has also achieved another milestone with us, on January 30, 2014, she completed her first full year as a member of the Quality First Family. Michele has done an outstanding job of increasing the efficiency & accuracy of our financial systems. Congratulations & Thank You Michele.

As to our routing & financial programming project; I wish I had better news about view and pay invoices on our websites. While the routing portion has gone fairly smoothly, we have run into some road blocks integrating the financial and routing programs. We continue to work diligently to overcome these obstacles. I am very confident we will and we'll get the word out to all when available.

Lastly, I hope you all enjoy the new look and feel of our Quarterly Newsletter. In an effort to ease communications, we are now able to send Newsletters via email to those who would like to receive them with more mobility. I encourage all who are able to email us at Qualityfirst@cfl.rr.com or call (407) 737-1889 and let us know that you would like to participate in email communications.

Thank you to all our friends & family and warm wishes for an early Spring!

SPRING *(Cont. from page 1)*

Plants that may need cut down...but wait until blooming cycle is over:

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

If you have larger plants that require cut down such as Ligustrum Trees, Large Viburnum Hedges, Podocarpus, Larger Hollies such as Nellie Stevens, Marinell, Oak Leaf, Luster Leaf Holly, Eggleston Holly, Larger Camelias. These are also plants that should have trimming reduced throughout the year and trimming should be done more selectively with hand clippers. This will reduce the stress created by constant shearing, will also reduce excessive shoot growth and will improve the overall health, vigor and appearance of these specimen plants. This will and should reduce maintenance time, your landscaper's time or the time you spend laboring in your garden.

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 add 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 our number one concern. It seems as though if we have nothing to do, we can trim a Ligustrum. Hollies, Boxwood and Podocarpus have all shown a better look without all the trimming.

Our Crepe Myrtles! PLEASE, do not commit crape murder!

They do not need to be trimmed, period! It is a preference issue or maybe a location issue; try to leave them alone. They flush quicker, bloom more, longer and over all just look better in our landscapes. If you must trim; trim nothing bigger than your finger, any outward or downward growing branches and any crisscrossing branches or just a general thinning is best for your poor Crepe Myrtles.

SECOND WITH

Scott

Gardenia (*Gardenia Jasminoides*) The Gardenia is mostly known for its fragrance and is normally a very slow growing specimen plant. There are many types of Gardenias, including the Dwarf Gardenia Radicans – known for its small leaf and low growing habit as well as a smaller bloom. However, it is the Miami Supreme that we usually see and use in our landscaping – it is a large grower...up to four to six foot tall. Some problems this plant faces are: chilli thrips, mites and scale.

The peak season for blooming is Spring, but it will bloom sporadically through Summer. The Gardenia prefers acidic soil types, which is sometimes hard to obtain; this plant also prefers a moist but not “wet” soil and likes to be fed at least two times a year with a good slow release fertilizer...which we provide.

To maintain an abundance of flowers, make sure to prune off old flowers and cold damage once Winter has passed – before Spring is recommended.



ZOYSIA TURF



Its time for our annual cut down; this is what I consider a necessary evil. Some lawns may not need this, please consult with us if you are unsure. We have worked diligently this past year to improve our Zoysia care. We have enhanced our program with a variety of nutritional products, but the main change is from reducing our nitrogen to reduce growth and thatch build up. This has worked as expected, thus many of our Zoysias will not require a major cut down, maybe just a slight buzz cut will be all it needs; this is the application needed for any full sun Zoysia. If you are in partial to more shade or are a first year Zoysia, I would recommend a buzz cut. If you keep your Zoysia cut tighter throughout the year, again you just may need a buzz cut. Once your Zoysia is cut down, please contact our office, so we may schedule your Spring fertilizer application to expedite the growing in process; which normally takes 2-3 weeks. There is no need to do extra irrigating as this can and will promote weed and disease growth; which can hinder our growing in process. If temperatures begin to reach 85°-90°, there may be a need to increase some frequency in irrigation.

HINDSIGHT 20/20

I think we all make the same mistakes when adding plants and new landscaping to our gardens; we do very little research on what we are buying, installing or having installed into our landscapes. We do not think about how big this is going to get, or how much of a mess (especially trees) they will make. We do not think about the sun, shade, wet or dry area, slopped, low areas, soil Ph, nematode issues, disease prone. How far apart should they be planted? How far away from a structure (someone has to get behind them to trim them)? It makes me think, why do we plant large trees under power lines? So we can spend more money on butchering them to keep them off the power lines. This trimming practice will not stop hurricane force winds from blowing that tree into the power lines! The challenge we all face is that we all do not have the ideal growing situation for all of our gardens. Think about what you want, research the plant for growing habits, likes and dislikes. Remember a plant will thrive for decades if installed in the proper location and given proper care; a plant will live for a minimal amount of time if not!

Thanks for your continued loyalty and business! Jeff

EMAIL THE EDITOR ~ Do you have a question or comment you would like addressed in an upcoming newsletter?
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Tips With Tom ~ White Footed Ant

Ants are somewhat of a challenge here in Florida, we have over 20 species to deal with. The most common varieties in Central Florida are carpenter ants, ghost ants and fire ants, which as we all know too well, can inflict a painful sting. Currently, Florida is being invaded by an ant species called the White Footed Ant; this ant is quickly taking over as the most challenging to deal with in Central Florida.

White Footed Ants are only 1/10th to 1/8th inch long. When viewed up close, the ant's lower foreleg is white to whitish-yellow; making them easy to differentiate from other small ants. They have black or brownish-black bodies and no stinger...so they cannot hurt you. White Footed Ants have a "sweet tooth" and enjoy snacking on the sticky honeydew exuded by sap-sucking insects such as aphids, soft scale and mealy bugs in the garden.

These ants are one of the hardest species to control. There are several reasons for this: they can reproduce faster than almost any other species of ants, they have many queens laying eggs almost constantly. Colonies can contain up to 3 million individual ants, with half of these possibly being reproductive members; making them a nuisance.

White Footed Ants can be seen trailing up the sides of houses often entering soffit vents that lead into attics. Because attics usually do not have food sources for the ants, infestations can frequently be treated by non-repellent insecticides or by placing liquid baits along the trails on the exterior of the home. This will cause ants nesting in the attic to emerge to feed on the baits.

A key aspect of White Footed Ants control involves trimming trees and shrubs surrounding your home to stop ants from "bridging"... trailing from the vegetation onto your home. Large trees infested with White Footed Ants that overhang onto the structure should also be trimmed back to stop "leaf nests" from falling onto the roof. White Footed Ants can also come from neighboring properties via adjoining vegetation, fences or across lawns.

The White Footed Ants are an extremely difficult pest to control, but control can be achieved with proper treatment and follow up visits. In most cases it is advisable to hire a professional pest control company to treat White Footed Ant infestations.

