



Owned & Operated by  
Jeff & Debra Melmer

## HELLO TO EVERYONE,

It's August... "The Dog Days of Summer". Another time of year that becomes very challenging, probably the most difficult time of year. The heat! a lot of rain, but not in all areas, the bugs and disease issues. Problem areas can pop up rapidly in some cases seems like overnight, but in most cases it's been festering (or developing) over time and then suddenly it manifests itself. The challenge is to correct this issue as it begins. Some corrections can take a week or two to correct; some can take a month or so, depending on the severity. At this point we will work diligently to correct any deficiency, as we always do. We will put forth all resources, knowledge and effort; but most importantly we will communicate with you on what the issue is and give you an idea of the length of time necessary to correct.



This is a time where we can show you what Quality First is all about; you will not receive an inexperienced technician working on commission who doesn't want to take the time necessary as you will with other companies. We will put forth with our highly trained technicians who understand what their role is to your property and their knowledge to correct the issues and communicate with you.

On every service to your property, our technicians are always looking, checking and doing extra to ensure your property looks its best; and if necessary, set up follow up visits to monitor progress. This alone is extremely valuable in the service industry; to my knowledge we are the only organization that wants to and does follow ups to ensure that your property will always look its best. We have over 150 years of experience in the field; this ensures knowledgeable, seasoned professionals to service your turf and shrub care needs. And what makes this even more beneficial to all of you is that you get to see the same tech month after month as well as year after year.

## TID BIT

### Rats

Most common in Florida – Roof Rats

Adult rat size – up to 18" long & weigh up to 20 oz.

Average litter size – 4-6 per year

Sexual maturity – 2-5 months

Life Span – 10-14 months

Senses –

- vision = poor and color blind
- hearing, smell & taste = keenly developed

Sleeping & Eating –

- sleeping = nocturnal
- food = practically anything
- likes fruits, veggies and cereal

Signs they are present –

- droppings
- gnaw marks
- dark greasy markings on vertical surfaces

Travel distances – 150-200 ft. for food and water along established trails from their nesting sites

Control – keys to control program are sanitation, harborage elimination and rodent proofing your home... close up any holes

## SERVICE

In our last newsletter we introduced a program change. This change was added to enhance our turf care and potentially solve a difficult seasonal problem called "Sod Web Worm". This application was applied in May and June to all of our turf/grass and in some areas throughout July. I must say that it was a resounding success! I do not remember our phones being so quiet during what is normally a hectic and stressful time of year.

This is a very expensive application! But the end result was...well, did you have any major Sod Web Worm damage this year? The one thing that we still have no answer to is the moths; I know this is a nuisance, but trust me when we say there is absolutely nothing we can do to rid your property of the adult Sod Web Worm moth. In time, they will simply go away...until next season.

Along with the Sod Web Worm preventative there is a trade off on bug control; what works on one does little for the other, which is the Chinch bug, which only affects St. Augustine grasses. Difficult to control as is, but it becomes the lesser of the two evils for turf/grass. This again, is where your experienced technician does his job, being vigilant to your turf care needs and ensuring there are no Chinch bugs present and if so, applying a localized insecticide application for control and setting up a 14 day follow up to ensure control was achieved. Unfortunately,



Continued on page 3

# MINUTE WITH

# Mike

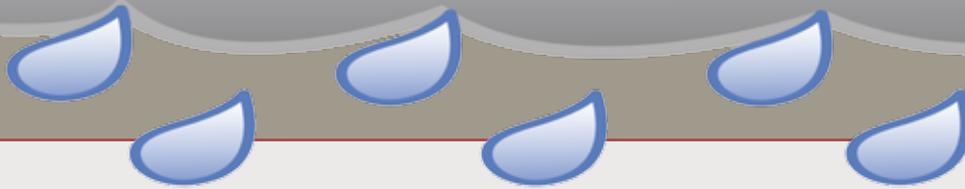


Hello to all of our friends & family of Quality First Lawn, Shrub and Home Services. I hope this steamy Summer season finds you well!

We have made a change to our email system; we are now hosting our own domains. Our new primary email address for Lawn and Shrub (exterior) is [Qualityfirst@QFLS.CO](mailto:Qualityfirst@QFLS.CO) and our new primary email address for Home Services (interior) is [Qfhomeservices@QFHS.CO](mailto:Qfhomeservices@QFHS.CO); please add us to your safe sender list. Each of our office staff also has a direct email address. So as we transition away from our old email, please be sure to check the addresses.

I'd like to take a moment to say a great big THANK YOU to Amy Briggs! Amy has helped us get through some very rough spots with our office staffing over the last two years. She has helped us in a full time capacity, to part-time and filled in for vacations. It's a long trip from Orange City to our office, but alas Grandmother duties now have priority for Amy. Best of luck Amy, we appreciate all you have done to help us out!

As always, thank you all for the privilege of providing our services to each of you. It is what we love to do! -- Mike



## RAINFALL VS. IRRIGATION

As we continue the ongoing discussion of irrigation and rainfall; we have complete control of our irrigation and we have no control over rainfall. The problem at hand is combining the two, or shutting off our irrigation because it's raining (which is good!); but we always seem to forget to turn it back on. Rainfall rates vary from area to area and sometimes just across the street. Monitoring your rainfall is an important step in managing your property and your water bill!

Trying to save money on water (irrigation) in the middle of the Summer is the last thing we want to do, save the savings for the Fall and Spring which greatly affects disease and weed control issues during those seasons. Monitor a rain gauge; as a rule I follow, if I get  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of rain, I am good for today. At a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " I can skip tomorrow's watering and if I get between  $\frac{3}{4}$ "-1" I am good to skip 2 days of watering. And at 2" plus you can usually skip 3 days before needing to water. It is best to monitor the weather so you know if rain is coming or not! I believe I had to irrigate my property 2 or 3 times all of July. To me, a perfect watering cycle is every 3rd day, with water restrictions; this is difficult but manageable if you desire this practice. It's not an exact science, but works well throughout the year; in our November issue we will discuss Fall and Spring watering requirements.



## SEASONAL ITEMS

Every year at this time we seem to see our St. Augustine grass not looking as good, many factors come into play here. The number one issue is mowing height! Do not lower your mower because the grass is tall...this is "scalping". This practice puts a great amount of stress on a plant that is already stressed from the heat, humidity and rain!

This can be detrimental to your turf's quality and appearance. At this time of year, your grass is growing vertically and the mowing height should be at a minimum of 3  $\frac{1}{2}$ ", with 4" being better and 4  $\frac{1}{2}$ " being better yet. The leaf blade is an extremely important part of the plant; it's what gives you your best color and is also crucial in food production. If we cut it off every week, we do not get to enjoy the color of our turf. As a rule, if your lawn is only green a day or two before it is cut, then looks bad or brownish after the cut, it's time to raise your mowing height. Your turf will slow its growth around October and at that time we can bring our mowing height back down to a more normal height.

This issue really is only concerning our St. Augustine turf, our Zoysias are really peaking at this time and mowing height should be at 2"-2  $\frac{1}{2}$ " maximum. And as always, if you have any questions regarding this, please call so that we can answer any of your questions. - Jeff



## SECOND WITH

Scott

In this issue of our newsletter, I will focus on the Azalea. This plant is arguably the South's favorite landscape plant. There are so many different types: dwarf varieties which feature a smaller leaf and bloom and the formosa varieties which grow larger, have larger foliage and blooms.

The Azalea belongs to the genus "Rhododendron" which comprises more than 800 species and 10,000 named selections. The varieties that we deal with on a regular basis are as follows:

**Dwarf varieties** – Fashion Encore, Duc DeRohan, Red Ruffle and a new variety named Vivid

**Larger varieties** – Formosa (including purple and pink) and Southern Indica as well as others

Most Azaleas perform best in filtered sun to light shade depending upon the variety you are working with. The soil should be acid, organically enriched and well drained. Clay type soils are very poor for Azaleas, that's usually a no, no. The most critical time frame is the first two years after planting. They have to get acclimated to the soil and environment we place them in. Do not plant too deep; remember when planting you want the top of the root ball slightly above the soil level.

If planted too deep, they usually succumb to fungal problems and the root system will not develop properly. Keep moist; these plants absorb water through their leaves (foliage), as well as their root system.

Some problems Azaleas encounter are pests (insects), such as Lace Bugs, Azalea Caterpillars and Mites to name a few. Another problem Azaleas encounter is disease, such as Phytophthora, which can be fatal.

This is just a tid bit of general information, if you would like to see some beautiful varieties and care instructions such as pruning, please visit [www.southernliving.com/home-garden/gardens/azalea-plants](http://www.southernliving.com/home-garden/gardens/azalea-plants). ...

remember, we handle the fertilizing and insect control.

Thank you and good planting.

– Scott



## SERVICE *Continued from page 1*

we may see minimal damage due to Chinch bugs and those areas will be monitored closely and treated with nutritional supplements until it grows back together.

Another change that is coming to our program will happen in September. At this time all lawn care will change to odd numbered months and all shrub care will change to even numbered months. The purpose of the change is so that all turf applications fall in line with our service schedule to enhance our turf care program. From the January pre-emergent, which works outstandingly well on crabgrass prevention, to the Spring and Fall granular fertilizer applications, to the May Sod Web Worm preventative and to July Chinch bug control in its peak season!

Although, I am sure you will notice no changes to your turf and shrub care as we service all of your property at each visit.

## BEST WISHES

To all of you who knew Lisa Deyo, we are sorry to say Lisa has moved on with her career. Lisa was a very valued team member and a good friend. Unfortunately, she had to resign due to problems with her hands and has gone to work for a maintenance company in a supervisory role with fewer physical demands.

Our line of work is physically demanding and for someone like myself with 28 years in the industry, I know firsthand the physical demands, the wear and tear on the body. For Lisa to perform at her level, exposed just how big a heart and soul she has! Thank you Lisa, we love you and wish you all the best!

With that being said, we would like to welcome Chris Nichols to our family. Chris has several years of experience and we look forward to Chris joining the team. Welcome aboard!

**EMAIL THE EDITOR ~ Do you have a question or comment you would like addressed in an upcoming newsletter?**  
[michele@qfls.co](mailto:michele@qfls.co) - Editor - Michele Criddle



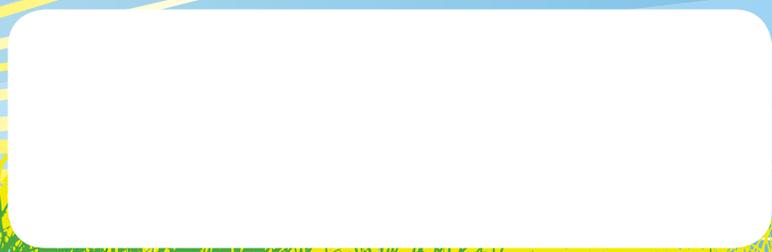
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### Tips With Tom ~ Controlling Fleas

Fleas are small, wingless insects that feed on the blood of animals and people. Americans spend about \$9 billion a year controlling fleas; this is one of the biggest expenses for pet owners.

In Florida, most flea problems are caused by the cat flea; this flea feeds on cats, dogs and wildlife. Other kind of fleas, such as dog, human and rat fleas are less common on pets and in homes. Adult cat fleas are about 1/8" long and are brownish-black in color. Their six legs, especially the hind legs, are long and adapted for jumping. Flea larvae are less than 1/4" long, are legless and are dirty white in color. The most likely place to find larvae is in infested pet bedding.

During their life cycle fleas pass through four stages: egg, larva, pupa and adult. Although they can jump, adult fleas do not usually travel long distances without a host. Fleas prefer to wait and jump onto a passing animal. Without a host, adult fleas live only a few days to 2 weeks.

The female flea begins laying eggs within 2 days of her first blood meal. Four to 9 days later she produces an average of 27 eggs per day, consuming about 15 times her body weight in blood daily; much of this blood is excreted as partially digested feces. Flea larvae feed on adult flea excrement; without it, they cannot survive.

Fleas do not survive well in our hot and sunny Florida lawns. Humidity is critical to flea survival; eggs need relative humidity of at least 70-75% to hatch, larvae need at least 50% humidity to survive. Moist, shaded spots near pet resting areas are the place to find fleas. Indoors, flea larvae are usually found under furniture and in pet bedding.

A combination of controlled humidity, temperature and vacuuming should eliminate fleas from an environment. Change pet bedding regularly and vacuum thoroughly at least twice a week. Vacuuming removes up to 30% of the larvae and up to 60% of flea eggs from carpet, as well as the larvae's food supply of dried blood.

Sometimes it's best to have professional help when dealing with fleas. A pest control company can treat both indoor and outdoor areas. Your veterinarian can prescribe oral or topical products for your pets that will also aid in killing adult fleas. You can eliminate fleas from your home, but it may take time, especially if the infestation is heavy.

