

VOICE OF QUALITY

NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2018



A MESSAGE FROM *Jeff*

By the time you read this Newsletter I hope that cooler temperatures are upon us. Shorter daylight hours reduce the heat duration in the afternoon, which gives us the ability to go out and enjoy the weather and our landscape.

In Florida I believe we barely have 3 seasons, spring, summer, and winter. Hailing from up north (Minnesota) we enjoyed the full 4 seasons. I do not like being cold, this is the reason I moved to sunny Florida. I love being outside, even in the summer I enjoy the heat and humidity! I know that sounds strange to most but when you remember what it was like to endure those northern bone chilling temperatures, the warmth feels good.

This time of year is typically when we see the most dramatic changes in our landscape. The turf greens up a little more as the temperatures cool down and the rains subside so we are not constantly wet. (Roots in wet soil is like having wet feet all day). Our shrubs slow their growth and are not being constantly trimmed, allowing them to shine a little more than normal. This is also the beginning of blooming season for many of our plants.

In this newsletter we include a lot of helpful hints and what to look for in your landscape. I hope that you find these articles helpful and informative. Some articles can be repetitive as the seasons sort of dictate the repetition of problems and concerns in our landscape.

Over the past several years we have modified the articles based on specific conditions and things we have learned. Some of the repetition is for getting helpful information to newer customers that have not had a chance to see or read.

We are in the process of finalizing a complete rebuild of our website. We are very excited to get this up and running and we hope you take some time and review it. It will also give you access to all of our past newsletters to review at your convenience.

I hope and wish all of you the happiest of holidays and look forward to a fantastic new year.





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REMINDER

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

We Care
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FREEZE WARNINGS

A few good cold nights through the winter really do more good than harm. We even need a couple of freezes in our temperate zone for the plant material considered best for our climate to thrive.

DO NOT RUN YOUR IRRIGATION IF A FREEZE IS PREDICTED!

You should even make sure the irrigation system is off so it does not do an auto-run.

Some will say it is good to run the irrigation on a night when a freeze is being called for, to warm the soil or insulate the plants. The only place this is actually recommended is in orchards or nurseries. These people sit up all night and monitor the temperature along with everything else that contributes to a freeze. Based on knowledge, experience, and weather reports they will run the irrigation at just the right time to protect the plants and not allowing the water to freeze. However, even these folks can make a bad call as the weather can change quickly. On the other side if the irrigation runs and the water freezes on the turf or plant material there will be extensive damage that far exceeds not running the irrigation at all.

The best thing you can do when it is likely to freeze is to cover sensitive plants (make sure the cover does not contact the plants) and then let Mother Nature run her course. Make sure you take the covers off the plants the next morning or the plants might get baked as temperatures warm back up.

You are always welcome to contact us if you have questions concerning protecting your plants from a freeze.

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.

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WEEDS, weeds, and more weeds!

During the summer months we are in the thick of it. As if the summer months were not challenging enough we add yet another problem to deal with.

In January of each year we apply a pre-emergent weed control to all of our properties. The primary purpose of this application is to reduce crabgrass, and does it ever work. It also helps immensely with controlling broadleaf weeds as well. The herbicide, at the rate we use it, gives us approximately 6 months of weed control. This puts us into July and that is about when our weed problems begin to escalate.

This year alone seems to be more challenging than past years. A lot goes into weed control. I tell our technicians that fertilizer plus water equals weeds. This is very much a seasonal issue, the rainy season. Our rain began earlier this year than in years past and we really seemed to have a wetter than normal year. Thus we encountered a lot of weed development.

Our technicians work very hard on weed control, but we do face a lot of challenges during the summer. #1 is the heat, we have to be very careful as herbicides are designed to kill! So we use a summer blend herbicide combination that works very well, but not always as well as we would like. #2 is the rain, we would prefer to get a minimum of 2 hours after an application with no rain or irrigation in order to achieve our goal of eradicating weeds in your turf. That is challenging as rain can seem to come out of nowhere and the storms move in and out very rapidly, thus sometimes giving us no warning of impending rain. It also is challenging as we cannot just sit and wait for rain to pass to finish our service. If we did we would rarely complete our service routes. #3 mowing, in a perfect world we would treat weeds 2 or 3 days prior to or after a cutting. This again is really challenging as we all have different mow days, dependent on who mows or if they are also behind due to the rain. In severe instances we will work out a plan to do an application around mowing. But even then a rain storm can ruin the plan.

Persistence is our biggest ally. Every month we walk your entire property for weeds in an effort to maintain an acceptable level of weed control. If we feel weeds are in excess or if it rained very soon after an application we will schedule a follow up to return to check and treat as needed. We cannot ever reapply a herbicide any sooner than 14 days to ensure we do not damage the turf. Better safe than sorry.

During the summer months a lot of weed growth happens, we always work to maintain invasive weeds like crabgrass, clover, dollar weed to name a few. Sedge seems to be a weed we receive a lot of calls on during the summer. We do not get outstanding sedge control during the summer due to the rain and mowing frequency. Sedge is not an invasive weed, it primarily is filling a void. We do our best to manage it while waiting for the cool season and the rain to slow or stop and mowing goes to every other week. This is the time of year we can get ahead on our sedge control.

We also at this time of year get to switch to our cool season blend of herbicides. This combination of products is much harsher and gives us some residual control with lower risk of damaging the turf in cooler months. The shorter days reduce our heat or at least the duration of higher temperatures and the cooler nights allow us to apply this blend throughout the cool season until April. This is the time of year we normally achieve our most effective control of weeds until the next rainy season begins.

I know that I and all of our technicians want more than anything for you to have a weed free lawn. We work diligently to achieve this throughout the year, we just face obstacles that make a completely weed free lawn not always achievable.



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. 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 to help 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.



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.

HOLIDAY TIPS

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 mosquitos 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!

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 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, Jatropa, 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. The air pushed from the average blower can exceed 140 mph. 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.

