



Owned & Operated by Jeff & Debra Melmer

"We Care"

VOICE OF QUALITY

MESSAGE FROM

Jeff

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2021

LOVE HATE RELATIONSHIP WITH ZOYSIA!

I love my zoysia grass, I have since I first installed it in my backyard in the early 2000's. That first year was a challenge because we had never worked with this type turf. I would say during my first year it was a big mistake. Then we started to figure it out and after year 2 it was the best decision I have ever made.

We tried and failed with different blends of fertilizer until we hit on the best choice, incorporated different spray applications and found much success.

There are many challenges with zoysia. A lot of seasonal issues and what seems to be very temperamental grass at times. We will start the spring with a cut down. This is involved and a big mess. But a needed step to keep zoysia at its best place. (please review our Zoysia cut down letter) once the cut down is complete we fertilize and water extra for about 2 to 3 weeks then we finally see green grass again. Zoysia is very dependent on overnight temperatures to actual start growing. Until we reach these temperatures, we are stuck in the mud so to speak.

Once we green up, we have beautiful grass. April, May, June are our best months. July through August is when problems begin to show up. Heat stress is first, this requires in certain circumstances an early afternoon hydration to alleviate stress and keep our grass green. Not all of us need this and usually this is caused by an undeveloped root system but wait are we not supposed to be growing you a healthy root system? Yes, we are and we work diligently all year to affect our zoysia grass properly. There are many factors in growing turf and plants and all are based on "optimal growing conditions" something that the majority of our landscapes lack. Some have concern over the Tuttle Mealy Bug during the summer months. We do not see this lawn damaging insect in our lawns due to proper applications and chemical selection during the time of year that they typically show up. From here our next issue is a disease called Pythium. This is when your zoysia gets a flat dull green appearance and seemingly refuses to grow out of it. Some cases grow out in 2 to 4 weeks. This last year we had some

that took 60 – 90 days. This is unacceptable for us, but we seem to not be able to push this grass any harder than it will decide to respond. We will be attempting some new strategies this spring and early summer to hopefully prevent this issue but only time will tell.

Our next problem comes in late July through September the dreaded Molecrickets show up. If you had molecrickets last year we apply a preventative in May to stop this insect and it works fairly well but not 100%.

September and October our zoysia is in fair condition and we can take a little breather from all the extra visits and service for our zoysia. October is when we try to get everyone to reduce the watering frequency so we can potentially prevent our next zoysia challenge. November is typically the beginning of a different fungus season. Known as brown patch, large patch, or zoysia patch. This is a soil temperature and moisture driven disease. Typically, 2 treatments at 30 days apart and we can stop this problem but if you got it, the damage is done. This is the beginning of when our zoysia begins to look its worst. The disease issue on top of our cool season starting and your zoysia goes dormant. When this occurs, there is absolutely nothing we can do to change the appearance of the grass. We have tried in vain but to no avail. We cannot make it grow again until spring. Lawn paint is an option. This actually works fairly well if we have leaf tissue, but if the grass is brown it only looks like brown grass painted green. We prefer not selling or applying this service without warning the customer of potential outcome.

At this time, we have come full circle to our spring cut down. Our job is to make every attempt to reduce your turfs worst time of the year so you can enjoy a beautiful green lawn for the majority of the year. "Then Rinse & Repeat for this year."

As you can probably see, zoysia to say the least is a challenge. Thus, we have the love hate relationship with zoysia. We will always make every attempt to give you the best turf on the ground at all times and honestly spare no expense or effort to give you what you desire, a beautiful green lawn.

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SPRING TRIMMING

This is the best time of year to cut back our shrubs so please review the plant listing and cut back procedures outlined in this article.

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

Spring is the best season to accomplish all your extra yard work. Its cooler, the heat and the humidity are not present to stress out your plants. Spring is the time of 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 back. **Plants that need cutting back annually...in no particular order:**

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

Plants that may need to be cut back due to being overgrown for their location or they just look messy or unkempt...again, in no particular order:

Coontie Ferns	Cardboard Palms	Liriope	Hollies
Hibiscus	Nandina	Snow Plants	Ixora
Criminum Lilies	Crotons	Camelias	Eugenias
Duranta	Boxwoods	Mondo Grass	
Trinetts	Sago Palms	Loropetalum	
Large Leaf Philodendrons	Shell Ginger (other Ginger varieties as well)		

Ground Covers: Jasmine

Plants that may need to be cut back...once the blooming cycle is over:

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

If you have larger plants that require cut down, such as Ligustrum Trees, Large Viburnum Hedges, Podocarpus, Larger Hollies (such as Nellie Stevens), Marynell, Oak Leaf, Luster Leaf Holly, Eggleston Holly or larger Camelias, It is the time of year



to get this done. The aggressive trimming now will reduce the trimming needed through the year. When they are cut back now you will be able to do more selective trimming with hand shears. This will reduce the stress created by constant shearing, it will reduce excessive shoot growth and will improve overall health vigor and appearance of these plants. This will reduce maintenance time, your landscaper's time or the time you spend laboring in your garden. Large hedges often get thin at the bottom. This usually is a result of the top shading the bottom. Cutting so the plant is about 25% more narrow at the top will usually help fill the bottom back in. Aggressive trimming now will only leave the plant looking bad for a few weeks and the reward will last the rest of the year.

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.

Palm Trimming



Before pruning

Trimming may be difficult depending how much cold weather we get over winter. If it is brown, cut it off! If there is any green in the palm frond it is best to leave it as long as you can. The green tissue is critical for the palm to create photosynthesis from sunlight resulting in energy to feed the plant until new growth emerges. You



Proper pruning

may find the first new growth produced has some browning, mainly streaks and or spotting. This is natural and a result of the cold injury. The damage done to the



Over-pruned

more tropical palms from the cold could put them in a very stressful situation.

Palms that may be damaged the most by cold weather are Foxtail, Royal, Bottle Palm, Areca, and Banana Adonai (Christmas Palm).

LANDSCAPE PALMS

Tropical palms are becoming more prevalent in our landscape. Although it is still what we consider risky business certain regions are seeing long term success. With disease always being a concern, certain palms are having issues. The Queen Palm is susceptible to Ganoderma and Fusarium Wilt. Neither disease is controllable or preventable. The Foxtail palm is an excellent choice or substitute as it is resistant to Fusarium Wilt (at this time). The Royal

Palm is also a suitable replacement, just understand it primarily needs room to grow at its base. Both of these palms are tropical, with one good freeze of 28 degrees for a few hours could result in the plants dying or at the very least being damaged to the point that it could take a few years to recover. The more established the plants are the better they will handle a freeze.

All the above palms are susceptible to Ganoderma. This is a terminal disease

and it is in the soil so replacing with another palm in the same area is not recommended however there is a process that if followed carefully you will have a better chance of the new tree surviving.

Sort of a buyer beware situation.



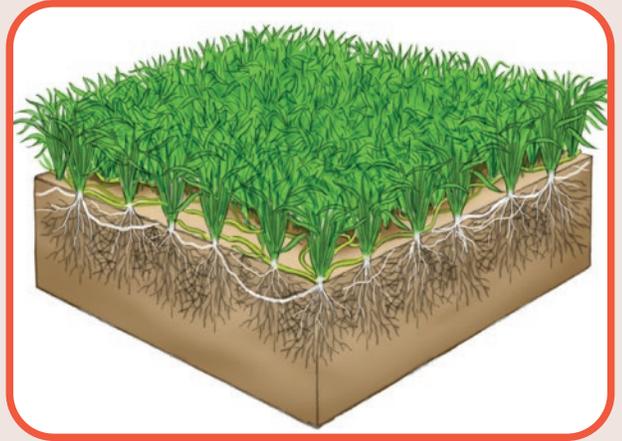
Foxtail Palm Tree

ZOYSIA TURF

ZOYSIA GRASS CUT DOWN

As you read through the “cut down” or “buzz cut” it should be a little easier process. Please review all the processes and always feel free to call if you have any questions regarding your Zoysia cut down.

Every spring we discuss cutting our Zoysia by doing a “Cut Down” or “Buzz Cut”. A cut down is the process of cutting the grass extremely low. You will remove most all that is green and some of the decaying material from last year’s growth and the natural winter decline. In the past years we have worked to fine tune our service programs to avoid this labor intensive and messy project. Most lawns will only need what is called a buzz cut. This is a tight cut with a goal of 1 inch. The primary reason for this is to reduce thatch buildup. Reducing the thatch build up will also aid in insect control as a primary pest of Zoysia is the Tuttle Mealy Bug. This bug finds harborage in the thatch and can be difficult to control in its hiding place. This also shortens the grass to allow for a seasonal growth spurt that will affect the appearance of the lawn all year. When you cut Zoysia this close, the lawn will be mostly brown. It will look like the lawn will die. You are truly scalping the lawn on purpose. Because it will look so bad and many landscapers just do not understand



Zoysia

it is a critical part of caring for Zoysia we have found it extremely difficult to get them to cut the way it should be done. Assure them you know they will cut all the green away leaving very little behind except runners. It will recover in a few weeks and if the lawn had not been mowed at the correct height in the past this is the only time of year and way to get rid of that “Shaggy” look. Just like a bad haircut it will grow back. Do not assume your landscaper knows this needs to be done. Many simply do not understand how important this is. If it does not get done in the spring the look of your lawn will suffer. Many of you will not be required to do a cut down or buzz cut but for those that do we have some changes in your watering program that should help to expedite the “grow in” of your Zoysia.

For those lawns that need a buzz cut or a complete cut down watering after the process should be done as though the lawn was a new install. Water every day for 10 minutes per zone. Practice this for 7 to 10 days or until you see green grass beginning to grow again. Then reduce the watering to your normal frequency. The cut down is extremely stressful and keeping the stems and runners moist during the recovery is critical. We have found in this situation a daily short watering is the best way to ward off additional damage.

This extra watering may generate more weed growth but we will work diligently to correct this as soon as the turf is strong enough to handle herbicides.

When doing a cut down or a buzz cut, we do recommend that you bag the grass that is removed. There will be a lot of material removed and leaving it on the ground will smother the grass resulting in excessive damage.

March is when we do the granular spring feeding. We would prefer to fertilize after the cut down or buzz cut is completed.

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO CUT DOWN PROCESS for 2021

This should be a much easier year to cut down zoysia. With the cool temperatures arriving early in December our zoysia went dormant and brown early and has stayed that way since. This can and should allow us to change the cut down process this season to make it easier on everyone including the landscapers.

Zoysia regrowth is very dependent on constant temperatures overnight of 70*. This usually begins in mid to late March. The process of a cut down is very involved, time consuming, and messy. A lot of debris is collected in this process. This year due to the cooler than normal temperatures our zoysia will be easier to cut down.

Our recommendation will be to begin a process of cutting at a lower level each week throughout March. This will be less debris each week but allowing us to eventually get down to our target of a minimum 1” level. This also will put us into a position by the middle to end of March as temperatures are at the level to allow the zoysia to green up fairly quickly. Your zoysia will begin its lateral growth at ground level so in some cases as you lower the cut, you will be exposing more green grass underneath the brown.

Our goal is always to shorten the time duration from brown to green. This should also result in not being required to add additional water in order to grow out zoysia.

There are still many Zoysia lawns that still need a full cut down. You may want to do a complete cut down all at one time in which we still recommend waiting until late March to do this.

Please call if you need assistance.

IT'S ALMOST SPRING

It is almost spring and I for one am glad. I do not like being cold! We have had a very cold winter by our standards. Looking back to last fall it began in the second week of November with a storm by the Greek alphabet name "ETA" this storm brought us 7 inches of rain in 1 week which was just piling on to a very busy storm season and a very wet year. From then on November was unseasonable warm, which is ok but it was a setup for December. As December started it was cooler than normal. Then came our first cold blast. This was the earliest cold blast to hit since 1995. The affect this had on our cold sensitive plants was noticeable in what we call the chilling effect. This is caused by no cooler temperature before this cold of an event. As temperatures normally cool down over time our plants begin to slow growth and then harden off, when this happens, we see very little damage from a cold snap. From there the roller coaster of cold versus warm weather began. Every week we were dealing with cold temperatures all through to the last blast of 30's for 3 consecutive days.

Cooler temperatures are actually good for our plants. They get some down time and slow their growth to a minimum, store food. Take a much-needed breather, so when spring hits they flush out and with some plants this is when the spring bloom begins for all to enjoy.

Our turf grass also took a hit with the first of many frost and lite freezes depending on your location. St Augustine actually enjoys a little cooler temperature but our zoysia grass

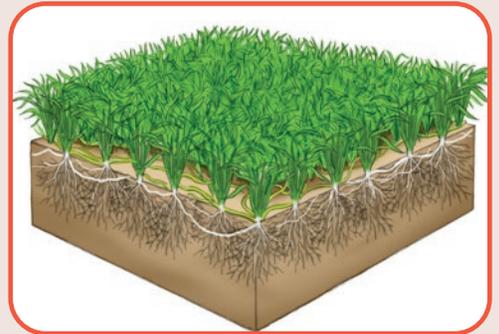
goes dormant and as a result of this really cold weather has

been stopped in its tracks. If you are a zoysia customer please review all of our zoysia articles. This year due to our cold temperatures we have changed the information on our zoysia cut down. Also be sure to look at the article on Love Hate relationship with zoysia.

With all that being said I hope this letter finds you all well. We are still dealing with a political adventure which is interesting to say the least. Covid is still at the forefront of all our lives. Can we just find a way to get these vaccines rolled out in a more efficient and expeditious fashion, so we can all get back to some sort of normalcy in our day to day lives.



St. Augustine



Zoysia



COVID-19 Vaccine

QUALITY FIRST LAWN AND SHRUB CARE

Quality First Lawn & Shrub Care was the beginning over 23 years ago. Focusing on providing the best service a lawn care company could, was the driving goal.

Since then we have added many services to our offerings. Our plan grew to offering as many industry related service as we could while maintaining our #1 goal which is to be the best.

We also choose not to push services through hard marketing tactics.

The next time you have a pest or irrigation issue give us a shot to see if we can help.

See our website for a complete listing of all our additional services.



ZOYSIA GRASS CARE

Planning for a late March early April cut down

Every spring we must cut down our Zoysia grass. This process is one of the most critical components to having a beautiful Zoysia lawn. By doing this the excess thatch from the previous year is removed. Not only will your lawn look better it will be much healthier. Yet this has been a constant battle to get landscapers on board, to do.

Most times they know how bad a cut down is going to make the lawn look and they are worried you will be upset or the process will kill the lawn. We thought this year we would provide you a letter that you can give to your landscaper, so they can plan for the spring cut down.

Landscapers,

If you have ever installed Zoysia, you know how tight it is cut directly from the grower. This is not something they do prior to the harvest. It is how they mow it all year long. The following information we are providing is how Zoysia must be cared for.

- We should never allow Zoysia grass to get over 2 inches tall. To keep it this short at the end of the year you **MUST** start the beginning of the year low. You should start the year at a maximum of 1 inch. This can only be done by measuring the distance from the concrete up to the blade cutting edge. You might take note of the mower setting so you know what setting matches the 1 inch height on your Zoysia mower. This is known as a buzz cut.
- If the lawn was allowed to grow over 2 inches the best thing to do is to cut it to the ground. This will allow it to grow all new foliage and structure. This is known as a cut down.
- When you do the cut down or buzz cut this customer knows the lawn will look horrible. It will be brown and scalped. They also know with our care in 2 or 3 weeks it will begin looking fantastic again and will stay that way all season long.
- The cut down or buzz cut will leave behind a lot of dead grass and runners. Most companies rake and bag the debris. If the lawn was allowed to grow real tall you might even have to cut it twice, first a little higher and then second down to 1 inch. However you get it done, the lawn needs mowed down to 1 inch or less.
- After you do the cut down you will keep mowing at 1 inch. It could be May or maybe even in June before you raise the mower. Just do not raise the mower until you start to see lite scalping from a fresh mow. You may do this 2 or 3 more times as the summer passes but avoid allowing the lawn to be over 2 inches at the end of the growing season. Combining your cut with our chemical knowledge will make our customer happy and result in both of us showing what true professionals we are.

You are welcome to contact our office directly if you have any questions.

You can also go to QualityFirstCares.com In the "Newsletter" section look at Spring 2021 for more detailed information

We hope you will take a minute and visit our web site.

www.QualityFirstCares.com

If you are installing new plants or turf this spring see "recommendations" on our home page, "Irrigating New Sod and Shrubs" to get the most success from your installation.

ST. AUGUSTINE GRASS VARIETIES

All St Augustine varieties are hybrids. They are germinated in a laboratory. They are sterile meaning the seeds produced will not germinate. It takes years to get a crop. Once established the grower will cut the product to be sold, but always leaves a strip of grass between the cuts that will grow back together so it can be harvested again, and again, and again.... Once a grower has committed to a variety they have to stick with it until they are able to grow enough of a new variety to market it. The last few years some new varieties of St Augustine have come to market. They tout benefits such as shade tolerance, bug resistance, disease resistance, better color and more. Having been in the industry for over 30 years we have seen many new types of St Augustine come to market that have failed. Like many new products, you never really know how it will perform out of the controlled testing environment until a couple of years pass. A good example of this is Palmetto St Augustine. This variety was propagated at Texas A&M. It was developed to have higher drought tolerance. It was designed for the Texas climate which is much dryer than our Florida climate. Years back when we had several years of drought in a row this variety was brought to Florida. It does look fantastic in drought conditions. But in a rainy year it gets Pythium Root Rot and falls apart. Yellowing, thinning, and even dying. The growers had committed to Palmetto and there is a massive inventory. So, it continues to be sold. Based on our experience, knowledge, and at this moment in time we make the following recommendation should you consider sodding or repairing areas with St Augustine grass.

In shady areas use Seville

In direct sunlight use Floritam

These are tried and proven varieties of St Augustine grass that will give you the best results. The other new varieties may work fantastic and after a few years we will know for sure, but we recommend letting someone else be the test subject.

FROST POCKETS

What the heck are frost pockets?

It has been several years since we have had as much cold weather as we had this year. Many of you have been around long enough to know exactly what we are talking about but those newer to Florida may have never seen his.

You will be finding out very soon. When we had cold weather this past winter, we had days that either frosted hard or even froze for a short period. Many times, this hard cold hit during the holidays and on weekends so by the time we got up and started moving around the frost had already burned off from the sun. So, you may not have scraped frost off your windows this year, but you will be able to tell just how hard you got hit by how your St Augustine lawn recovers this spring.

Round fist size "or there abouts" dead spots will be all through areas of your lawn. The grass around those spots will start turning green and growing 2 maybe even 4 weeks before the pockets start to heal. Somebody will tell you it is bugs, or disease but the bottom line is damage from cold weather injury. Your spring fertilizer and the other things we have been putting out all winter will fill in those pockets as good as anything can.

We do not recommend digging out the small pockets or filling the spots with soil. This might cause more damage by pulling out live grass or burying live runners. The dead material will decay and live grass will go.

The only real and practical solution is you will just have to give it time.



TIME CHANGE

Monday March 14th is the day your clocks will "spring ahead". This is also the time when most areas will be allowed to start adding additional water on your plants and turf. Be sure to allow the weather conditions to dictate as to the need for increased watering. March and April can be rainy months so it is best to determine the need of watering by watching the plants. If they are showing signs of wilt extra water will be needed.



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MARCH 14th, 2021
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EMAIL THE EDITOR - Do you have a question or comment you would like addressed in an upcoming newsletter? Send them to lynn@qualityfirstcares.com

R/O MPS 407-657-7414 QF-NL01 02/21



TERMITES!

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TERMITE SEASON IS HERE

Why do they call it Termite Season?

Termites are always threatening your home. Be it Drywood or Subterranean they are around all year. Our industry calls it termite season because for many the only or first sign that you have termites in your home, is when they swarm. Over winter the queen of a termite colony and even many species of ants, produce what are called secondary reproductives. These are insects that have wings and will fly away from the colony to start a new colony. They are new Kings and Queens. Depending on the size of the original colony and the success rate of the insect being able to start a new colony impacts the number of swarmer's that are generated over the winter. It could be 100's and even 1000's. During this time the swarmer's are fed and nurtured by the workers. When weather conditions get right the queen sends a message telling all the workers to push out the swarmer's. The result is a bunch of dead

bugs in your home. You now know for sure that you have some species of termite or ant that has made your home, theirs.

As a general rule;

- Ants swarm between February and July
- Subterranean termite from February through April
- Drywood Termites from May through July

Should you have an insect swarm in your home save a few samples in a zip lock and vacuum up the rest. Make note of where you found them. Then call your termite company and make sure they identify the pest you have and that they provide a proper solution. Ignoring a swarm will just cost you more in repairs when the damage gets extensive.

Home Owners insurance does not cover damage caused by termites and we are in a very high risk area with over 30% of the grand total spent each year dealing with termites in all the continental states combined, being spent in Florida.

