

VOICE OF QUALITY

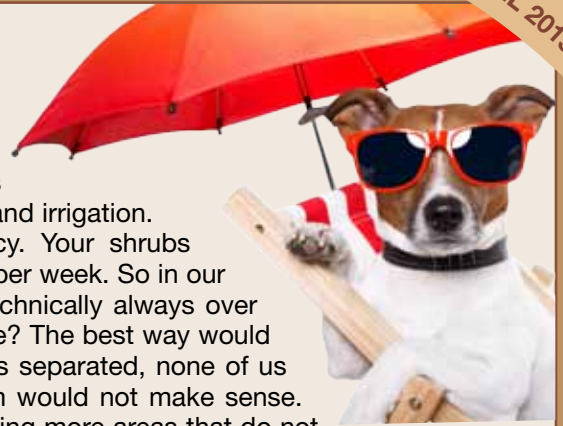
NEWSLETTER - FALL 2015



Owned & Operated by
Jeff & Debra Melmer

THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

It got hot early and it has stayed hot! This alone created a lot of issues with our turf. As in past newsletters we always discuss grass and irrigation. Grass always requires more water frequency. Your shrubs very easily could thrive on irrigating one time per week. So in our effort to maintain a good looking lawn we technically always over water our shrubs. How do we find the balance? The best way would be to have our turf and shrub irrigation zones separated, none of us have that. The cost of renovating our system would not make sense. You could eliminate turf and add shrubs creating more areas that do not require additional or supplemental watering. You can also create more flower garden areas that require little to no watering. Add in mulch areas, rock areas, a pond or water feature, a sitting area with bird baths and bird feeders, a butterfly garden, a paver patio area with a fire pit. All ideas that work to create a garden without dependence on water, primarily water frequency. Our grass is our most visual aspect of our landscape. Having beautiful green grass stretching out over our property just enhances the visual effect of our landscape.



GRASS HAS MANY BENEFITS

It's a noise reducer, it helps to cool your property and home, keeps soil temperatures down, reduces erosion, gives off oxygen, and prevents weeds. It also creates a lot of work and stress. Grass requires constant frequency of everything, mowing, weed eating, edging, fertilizing, bug control, and most of all watering.



The stress comes from, "what is wrong with my grass"?

Its bugs, its disease, it could not be water with all the rain we are getting. It's all of the above! There is no magic formula to creating and maintaining a perfect lawn. It is a lot of year round work. This summer it got hot early and a lot of issues developed. We have always discussed brown spots as being drought related. I have given considerable thought and discussion as to using the term "drought". Drought is what Texas and California have gone through the last few years. We think of drought as a long term period of little to no rain fall. We typically do not have long periods such as these. I would like to use the terminology "heat stress". This fits our situation much better, especially when dealing with grass. We have had an endless numbers of days this summer where the heat index has been over 100 degrees. These temperatures along with the mere intensity of the sun cause a great deal of stress to everything exposed. Plants and turf wilt even when the soil is moist which is simply due to scorching from the sun.

There are many, many factors that are involved in good turf management. The most important aspect of your grass is its root system. Developing and maintaining a good root systems is challenging at best. Most all of us have areas of grass that typically always look good and then the areas that always struggle. These areas in most cases have very little root development. There are many reasons as to why and in many situations not much can be done to improve this problem. Poor irrigation coverage can be on the top of the list for why there are weak areas, without proper coverage roots will not develop, if you correct this issue it will take time to regrow roots. One day of stress over the threshold for that turf type can take months to recover. These areas will not suddenly grow in once the rain begins. Some other contributing factors for weak spots are low wet areas, mucky or porous soil, improper mowing, shade, slopes, PH, nematodes, traffic / root compaction, disease, and bugs can all be part of the problem.

Continued on page 2

MINUTE WITH

Mike



Hello to all family and friends of Quality First Lawn, Shrub & Home Services. Since my hiatus from our last newsletter I just wanted to take a minute to update you on the latest improvement in our office.

In late July we cutover to our new VOIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) phone system. Over a 2 month period we very thoroughly vetted the top 3 rated VOIP providers in the nation. We chose based on access to multiple data centers and technical support response with an added focus on crystal clear call quality and minimal dropped calls.

Alas, with all the best laid plans, the cutover did not go as smoothly as we had so meticulously planned for. We had a very difficult 2-3 day period to resolve all issues. I apologize to anyone who was affected by this and hope it didn't inconvenience you too much. I believe we now have a superior system in place which will only add value to your communications with Quality First.

I would like to thank Michal Kolakowski of MK Consulting. With his tireless work and a great response from our provider's technical response group, we were able to resolve the unexpected issues that arose and get our new system running to our initial expectations.

Until next time, have a great autumn season. *Thank you.* MM

GRASS HAS MANY BENEFITS *(continued)*

All scenarios have to be evaluated in order to correct the issues, some are not correctable or are only altered for a period of time.

How do I correct or change my landscape so that these are not long term issues?

There are many alternatives, new landscaping, new sod, top dressing, eliminate areas of turf, artificial turf, repair irrigation systems properly and have it maintained to keep up with deficiencies. As you know these alternatives can be costly. It is during the summer that we have most of our issues. The heat / heat stress, inconsistent rain meaning where the rain fell and how much actually soaked into the ground at your home. It is wise to monitor a rain gauge to ensure knowledge of the amount of rain you receive on your property. It does not rain the same everywhere. A long slow rain can produce a mere 1/4 inch of rain! But a fast moving storm can produce 2-3 inches of rain in hours, but most of it runs off into water ways. All of this again makes maintaining turf a challenge. With all the right practices and services in place your landscape typically will always look its best, lose one piece and trouble begins, so again there is no magic formula to growing and maintaining a perfect lawn, it just takes a lot of work.

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.

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

qualityfirstlawnandshrub.com

SECOND WITH

Scott

LESSONS WITH LYNN

In this article we are going to cover the disease called Downy Mildew. Particularly affecting the Viburnum Suspensum, an ornamental shrub that is very popular in our landscapes. This disease shows up on the foliage of the plant, on top of the leaf as well as the bottom. It looks like brown, blackish spots covering the leaf. The damaged leaves fall to the ground leaving a plant with very little foliage. New growth is very slow to return. This disease season has been a very long one extending from early winter to present summer.



After further investigation this disease is most likely attributed to a couple of known factors such as a warm winter as well as the humidity being so high so early this year. Among other factors such as old leaf litter under the plants, improper plant placement, too much shade, and not enough air movement. So with all of that being said we are diligently trying different control measures on a daily basis. We are using specialized fungicide treatments recommend by the University of Florida as well as consulting with customers about environmental changes, watering and pruning practices. We have had some positive results but not complete success.

We will continue working to prevail against this very tough disease.

A good source to learn more about this disease is the University of Florida website. Go to IFAS.com and use the search bar to find material related to diseases.

– Scott

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

We are often asked if the products we spray, in, on, and around the home will hurt anyone.

We go to great lengths to select products that have the least risk factors and that will accomplish the job. We do research when selecting the product, we carefully review every part of the label so we know exactly what the product can do, and determine exactly how the product should be applied including how much should be applied. We also go to great lengths to make sure that our technicians completely understand all of this information. All of this cumulates to your property, health, and family's general wellbeing, being protected from disease and pestilence. I think this is all something most every company in our industry has as a primary goal.

The factor that separates us from the rest is we are willing to invest in products that most other companies will avoid. For example; we feel if there is a product that only requires 1 application and it resolves a situation, we will select that product. Others may feel that even if they have to make 2 or more applications with a product that is less costly but in the end pretty much does an ok job that is the way to go. Our opinion is when using less expensive products it will take longer to solve the problem, more chemical has to be used, more damage could occur and more chemical will be required to fix that damage. It may cost us a little more but we will put less chemicals into our environment by giving more weight to doing the right thing opposed to what is best for the bottom line.

It is also very important to understand that healthy, vigorously growing plants and turf prevents run-off, erosion, and improves water filtration back to the aquifer. The landscape around the home also helps cool the home during the hot summer months reducing energy costs. We even have to consider the "curb appeal" of the property when everything looks like you want it to.

You can always trust that our highest concern is protecting your family and your investments. We will always use only the product that will get the job done quickly and with our environment in mind.

Fact! The majority of products we use have a mammal toxicity level that is less than table salt when mixed and applied according to the label specifications.

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 too 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)

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 aide 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 1-½ – 2 inches.





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HELPFUL HINTS FOR AROUND THE HOME

— with Jeff & Lynn

Whenever doing construction, painting or pressure washing always consider your landscape!

Construction people often do not think about the damage they can do while completing their work. Ask them to be careful not to trample plants and to not set up tools and equipment in the grass if any way to avoid doing so.

Painters often fail to think about the damage caused by cleaning up brushes and such. Ask them to clean tools in the mulch beds and not the grass.

Pressure washer people often use chemicals and chlorine that does extensive damage to shrubs and turf. Chlorine will burn foliage and can even be absorbed through the root system of plants. Ask them to not use any stronger of a mix than is needed to do the job. Often just telling them you will be looking for chemical damage during the weeks after they do their work and hope not to find any will be enough to make them slow down and be more cautious.

A little communication about damage with your contractors prior to work can save yourself a great deal of money and stress from damage. Advise the contractor where they can clean their tools, set up their work station and limit peripheral damage while doing the work. Set expectations by ensuring that you are aware of your property's condition and will follow up on the damage potential at work completion and for a few weeks after completed.

These things will help insure your landscape will look its best before and after outdoor maintenance.

All year long your home is susceptible to invasion by roaches that prefer to live outside. These roaches are often called Florida Woods roaches and Palmetto bugs. The roaches are attracted to light and will crawl in through small openings around doors, windows, and anyplace else the light shines out at night. During the day if you can see sunlight coming in around the seals of your doors and windows you will have house lights shining through at night. Inspect and repair seals as required and you will greatly reduce the chance of invasion by these occasional invaders.

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