



Owned & Operated by Jeff & Debra Melmer

"We Care"

VOICE OF QUALITY

MESSAGE FROM

Jeff

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2018

STRESS AND DAMAGE 2017/2018

The past year and especially the last 6 months have been extremely challenging for our landscapes. With the hurricane last fall, the wind and rains put a lot of stress on our plants and trees. As we sort of settled into the fall and winter season, if you consider it winter, we felt pretty good and everything began to heal from the storm damage. Then came January with some of the coldest temperatures that we have seen in at least 5 years. This again, put a great deal of stress on our landscape.

Turf is the quickest to turn brown after a frost and typically the first to green back up except for our Zoysia lawns. Shrubs will begin to generate new growth as the warm days and nights return. It is best to wait on trimming shrubs, palms, and small trees until March. Please review our spring trimming article for more in-depth information on the cutting back of shrubs. Because of the frost damage we experienced, this will be a great year to do major reforming of overgrown plants.

There is a lot of cold injury out there! Some properties had damage much worse than others. This can be the result of the irrigation running on a cold night, the wind, exposure to more dew prior to frost, particular plant tolerance. But some of the damage is due to several years with no heavy freezes resulting in people feeling more comfortable introducing more tropical shrubs, trees, and palms to our area. This winter likely will be a wakeup call for our nurseries and landscapers as many of these plants will take a year or longer to recover and some will simply die and need to be replaced. The large palms are the greatest concern as they grow slowly. It could take years for them to recover, and the cost of replacement is expensive or cost prohibitive.

The following is a list of plants in which cold damage is very likely. Some of the plants are common to our area and we understand the risk of mild to moderate damage from freezes is there but they generally recover. Some are more tropical in nature and replacing with an alternative more cold hearty plants may be recommended.

This list of plants we have seen damaged from this winter is in no particular order.

General Landscape Plants: Green Island Ficus, Powder Puff, Canna Lilies, Cordyline, Duranta (Gold Mound), Trinetts, Hibiscus, Bougainvillea, Tropical Gardenia, Ixora, Jatropha, Xanadu / Philodendron, Plumbago, Crinum Lilies, Tibouchino, Hamelia (Fire Bush), Regina Iris, Cardboard Palm, Pin Wheel Jasmine, Crotons, Ferns, Fire Cracker Plant, Fire Spike, Eugenia.

Perennial Plants: Josephs Coat, Lantana, Penta, Blue Daze

Vines: Passion, Bleeding Heart, Pipe

Trees: Cassia, Avocado, Orchid, Poinciana

Palms are listed in Spring Trimming Article.

Our programs are designed to benefit our landscapes throughout the very challenging seasons and keeping our turf, shrubs, and trees healthy is our first priority. Through well planned and delivered fertilization, insect control, disease control, and proper irrigation is how we succeed on a month to month and year to year basis. Proper maintenance has a key role in our success, trimming of shrubs can be very stressful if done wrong or at the wrong time of year, proper mowing reduces stress and also allows our turf growth to slow down and go dormant allowing our turf to be better prepared for cold weather so less damage is incurred during the season. Adjusting the water frequency seasonally also is a major contributor to the health of our landscape. Excessive water frequency is a magnate for disease and pushing tender new growth is more susceptible to cold damage.

As spring arrives our grass will begin to grow green again, our shrubs will push out new growth and look lush and beautiful. I hope you take time to review this newsletter. There is a lot of beneficial and hopefully educational information in which we feel is important to all of our customers to start the growing season off strong.

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SPRING TRIMMING

It has been about 5 years since our last real cold snap. I believe the low temperatures varied, especially in our northern communities dropping in the 20's. The length of time below 32 degrees was the determining factor for who received the most damage. Regardless the cold had a large impact on shrubs throughout our entire region. However, this puts us in a good spot as it is easier to aggressively trim back brown plants than a full green and healthy plant.

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		
Crimnum Lilies	Crotons	Camelias	Eugenias
Duranta	Boxwoods	Mondo Grass	
Loropetalum			
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 Ligusturm 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 specimen 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

This will be difficult since many of our tropical palms had extensive damage. 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 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 more tropical palms from the cold has put them in a very stressful situation. Many could take up to, if not over, a year to recover. Some of these palms that still have green may have even died or may die but you will not know until they begin to grow again.

Palms that seem to have been damaged the most by the cold weather are Foxtail, Royal, Bottle Palm, Areca, and Banana Adonai (Christmas Palm)

MOSQUITO SEASON

No one can promise a completely mosquito free environment but we can keep you from being eaten alive. By using the most effective equipment, products, and mosquito Biology & Habits knowledge you can enjoy your property and seldom see a mosquito.

Try one treatment and if you are not impressed we will cancel the service and return your money. This offer is good March and April 2018.

Each year it seems we are warned about a mosquito related disease that will be affecting us. Florida communities are still battling Zika even though you might



not hear about it in the press. Be sure to protect yourself if you are outdoors this summer. Dusk and Dawn are the worst time but in the shade during the middle of the day (*cont. on pg. 3*)

MOSQUITO SEASON cont.

can be risky as well. For those new to Florida, Zika can affect the brain development of children while in the womb. If you are, or planning to be pregnant we recommend you search Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Zika on the internet so you can protect your unborn child and family the best you can.



Mosquito



Midge

For those living on or near a body of water you will have periods when small flying insects seem to be everywhere by the millions. You will see these insects flying during the day or resting in shaded areas of your property. Unlike mosquitos you will see them all day long. These are Lake Midges commonly called Blind Mosquitoes. While a critical part of the aquatic food chain they are a huge nuisance to us. The most important thing to understand is they do not bite and that nothing can be done to stop them. A treatment might offer a few hours to a day of relief at best but they will be back the next day. Fortunately they will go away after a week or two, however additional hatches can occur throughout the year.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM WOES

Very often we find that an entire irrigation system has been adjusted to run way too long or frequent to fix a small area of the property that does not get enough water.

This is the wrong way to fix a problem. It is a huge waste of our water resources. It cost more money if you pay for water, even if you have a well you use electricity to run the pump. Worse of all, you are over watering the rest of the property creating problems that require fungicides and fertilizers to be used in excess. When it comes to irrigation, seldom is a new system all it should be because of bidding restrictions. The builders look at who will put a system in at the lowest price so they can say you have an irrigation system. Our next biggest issue is that repair people will come in and feel that if they price a job to fix everything properly to maximize the system that they will give the customer “sticker shock”. Or to be completely frank they do not know how to do it right in the first place.

The most effective, cost efficient, environmentally favorable way to run an irrigation system in Florida is to have a system that even distributes $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of water across all turf and shrub beds evenly.

Does your system have any of the following, heads on high risers, heads sticking out of the ground, heads bent sideways? These are huge signals of a system that has been patched or improperly repaired. Does your lawn have wild Bermuda in it, or do you have the same “bad” spot every single year? Then you have spots that are not getting enough water during

critical periods of the year. Do you have areas that look great but you have a huge water bill? Your system could easily be putting out way more water then needed.

As a rule 3 to 4 times a year any imperfections in your irrigation will result in plant material damage. It is the 2 or 3 weeks when it stops raining. Usually happening between April and June and again from August through October. If you have St. Augustine grass the damage done in this 2 or 3 week period will take months to fill back in. Why isn't it a problem all year? We get enough rain to hide the serious irrigation imperfections.

If we go through your irrigations system we will look for problems.

that will result in damage during these dry periods. We insure the system is evenly putting out $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. (Ask your current irrigation person if they know how much water your system puts out in each zone or have they done a volume calibration for you?) Most will not know and in response they will say “everything is getting covered” or “it is fine”.

We will go through your system for free and we will tell you what needs done to fix it right and we will price the job in a fair and consistent way.

Or you can pay someone else over and over to patch all the problem areas and maybe eventually resolve them all. Sure it will seem cheaper but is it worth all the aggravation along the way and generally you actually spend more in the end?

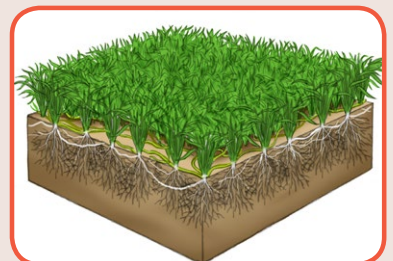
If everyone had a “do it right the first time or don't do it at all mentality” we would not be having this discussion, which is sad.

ZOYSIA TURF

ZOYSIA GRASS CUT DOWN

Now that we can say we actually had a winter many of our Zoysia lawns have gone completely too partially brown. This helps us in the fact that it makes it easier to cut down and prepare it for the upcoming growing season. 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 **(cont. on pg. 4)**

ZOYSIA TURF cont.

messy project. Most lawns will only need what is called a buzz cut. This is a tight cut with a goal of 1 to 1.5 inches. The primary reason for this is to reduce thatch buildup. 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 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.

Temperatures will also play a key role in how quickly the lawn recovers. Zoysia grows extremely slow in cool weather. We recommend waiting to do your cut down or buzz cut until the overnight temperatures are averaging 70 degrees. The forecast is that March temperatures will be about average to slightly above average. You may want to plan your cut down for around mid-March.

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. We will do our best to communicate with all our Zoysia customers prior to doing your granular fertilization application. If you have any questions or concerns please call our office or if you rather we can schedule a consultation.

St Augustine Turf

With the exception of some fungus and a few weeds our St. Augustine had a good winter. There was very little cool weather damage to most properties and with the spring granular fertilization we should see the grass take off and be what is expected. Good green color, good density, and minimal weed issues.

QUALITY FIRST LAWN & SHRUB 20TH ANNIVERSARY

It has been 20 years since Quality First opened the doors and decided to operate as a first class Lawn & Shrub Company. As the saying goes, "My how time flies when you are having fun". I have to say it has been a great 20 years because of all our great customers. I tell people all the time that we have the best customers and I truly believe that! Yes there are difficult and challenging properties but when we make things better when no one else has, is what makes what we do worth it all.

As a service organization we strive for perfection! This alone is what drives our will on a day to day basis. We never wanted to say we are the biggest or how fast we can grow, but instead always focus on how good we can be. With 20 years at Quality First and 32 years in our great industry we look forward to 20 plus more years of being able to service all of you and our communities.

I want all of you to know that by this point a lot of companies in our industry, look to sell their business. Our goal is the complete opposite. I / We love what we do and our goal is to do it and in the end our hope is to turn it over to our employees. This has always been our goal as it gives our employees another reason to stay. We have great employees and like you we try to treat them as family.

To all our customers, associates, vendors, colleagues, friends, family, and all those that have helped us along the way to reach our 20th anniversary. We cannot thank you enough.

Jeff Melmer



**QF 20th
ANNIVERSARY**

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TIME CHANGE

Sunday March 11th 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 11th, 2018
DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME
Time To Resume
Twice - A - Week Watering

We Care
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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 qualityfirst@qfcs.com

TERMITES!

qualityfirsthomeservices.com

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 feed 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.

