



Owned & Operated by
Jeff & Debra Melmer

10 plants that are natural mosquito repellents:

Citronella

Citronella Grass

Lemon Balm

Marigolds

Catnip

Lavender

Lemon Verbena

Creeping Lemon Thyme

Basil

Rosemary

Most Herbs are natural Mosquito repellents

THE PERFECT LANDSCAPE

Does this exist? Is it possible to achieve the perfect landscape? Well that's all dependent on you and us.

What makes a beautiful Landscape?

We start out with a plan and sometimes a blank canvas. We add the "feature" plants like large palms and trees. We surround them with beautiful flowers and shrubs and when it's all done it is the most beautiful landscape you have ever seen or wanted. This is just the beginning, now we have to care for this masterpiece.

Everything starts with your expectations on how it should be maintained. Maintenance comes with a lot of moving parts.

- It is the landscaper who we rely on to mow, edge, weed eat, trim, and keep up on shrub bed weeds.
- It is Quality First's role to provide fertilization, insect, disease control in both turf and shrubs, and weed control in the turf.
- It is up to the irrigation service to provide and maintain the irrigation system so it functions properly and water gets to all of the turf and shrubs. We hope that is handled by Quality First as well.
- It is also you, your desire, your vision, your communication on what you want and expect.

Thus we now have a perfect landscape, or do we?

If all works out in this challenging climate we live in, all is good, but this is just the beginning of many challenges to come.

At my home the landscape is a labor of love! It is my passion, but yet my landscape is ever evolving. As many of us do I often change things in my landscape. Some from necessity, some for the sake of change, and some for a more colorful look.

With all that said this is where we can run into problems. When we change the plant arrangement did we factor in the irrigation needs and requirements? This is usually the last thing to be considered as the irrigation is already in place. The new shrubs might require more time or more frequent watering. Possibly the newly installed shrubs are now blocking water coverage. Typically this is not discovered as an issue until something starts to decline or dies. This can be an expensive learning lesson for all involved.

Now that we have improved the landscape, do we truly know how to care for it? One thought is that our landscapers should just know! Do they? A lot of plants are easy to maintain, just get out the trimmer and cut

away. Standard pruning and trimming techniques are not always preferred or the best way to care for a plant. Knowing how to trim and when to trim takes training and knowledge. Skills that are developed over time. Gas shears typically work well with soft tissue plants. On woody ornamentals damage done increases as the stem size increases when using gas shears. Hand clipping is time consuming but much more beneficial and healthy for the plant. It is best to know what shrubs benefit more from hand clipping to give you a more natural look, also aiding in the life expectancy of the plant.

We have a wide range of landscapers to choose from. There are the high end extremely detailed companies all the way to the "Mow, Blow & Go" companies. As a rule what you pay will match the level of service you get, but it is best to pick the right one for your landscape and your expectations and then determine what you will pay. Weekly maintenance has a very important role in the overall lifetime of your landscape. Did I say lifetime? How long is that? Your lifetime, my lifetime, or the lifetime of the plants? We all expect our landscape to thrive for decades. This is achievable if all goes exactly to plan. The right plant in the right place, proper care, trimming, mowing, watering, fertilization, and pest control.

Now we must discuss the aging of our landscape. In our area we consider getting 10 to 15 years a success for shrubs, over 15 years for palms, and trees can outgrow the environment they have been put in before they die. This does not mean that the plants will all die in this time frame, but this is when you will begin to see issues developing. From the beginning proper care is the key but can be very challenging due to constraints such as time or money.

Over planting, improper installation, over trimming, over watering, over mulching are all factors that can have a negative impact on how long your landscape will survive.

There are many factors we can control and many that are completely out of our hands. The weather has the greatest impact, for example the 50 plus inches of rain per year and most of that coming in a 4 to 5 month period. Also the excessive heat and humidity can put a lot of stress on our plants ability to thrive. There are so many damaging soil born organisms that we do not even want to discuss them here. The seasonal changes from cool weather, shorter daylight hours and even the shifting of the sun can be extreme to some landscapes. This all plays a role in our success and failure in today's landscapes.

ZOYSIA TURF SEASONAL UPS AND DOWNS

Why doesn't my Zoysia look like it did last summer?

Zoysia grass growth is very dependent on air and soil temperature. Once we go below 70 degrees overnight in the fall, Zoysia growth slows dramatically and stops the production of chlorophyll. As the air and soil warms in the spring the growth starts back up again. This directly affects its color and general appearance. Overall Zoysia lawns are looking as good as they can based on the weather conditions we experienced this spring. Your last application was designed to improve and hold color as best as possible for this time of year. In May and June you will see continued improvement.

MOWING Zoysia

Zoysia is a favorite turf of many. It offers a lot of benefits and certainly a lot of challenges. Our Zoysia spring was a slow one. The temperatures, especially overnight temps were not conducive to a quick grow in after cut downs were complete.

Zoysia can be very temperamental. We at Quality First are always striving to put together a comprehensive plan to maintaining our Zoysia properly throughout the year. So in most newsletters we try to educate and inform all involved on what our seasonal and annual Zoysia grass needs are and how it should be maintained.

So as we look ahead to this upcoming season, which is our rainy season, the most important part of Zoysia care is mowing. After a buzz cut or a cut down it is important to maintain mowing at 1 inch for as long as possible. This is usually early to mid-June before you raise your mower 1 notch (this is generally ¼ inch so you are mowing at 1 ¼ inch). You might have to go up another ¼ inch in August and so on. Whenever a fresh cut leaves areas that look like they have been slightly scalped it is time to go up 1 notch. This is very important to maintain this slow step up in mowing height so you are not over 2 inches in November. Doing this will result in only needing a buzz cut in the spring which is



less costly than having to do a full cut down because the lawn has too much thatch. A full cut down is very labor intensive, messy, create a lot of debris, and expensive.

In our fall newsletter we will begin discussing more Zoysia related issues for that season and preparing you all for the spring addition with cut down and buzz cut information, as we feel some changes should be discussed.

As always if you have any questions regarding your Zoysia lawn care please call.

SERVICE

May has now become the beginning of Sod Web Worm season, although we have been finding Sod Web Worm during April as well they really take off in May. Your next turf application includes our Sod Web Worm prevention treatment.



Most companies do not apply this product and instead choose to be reactive. We are doing our best to protect your property and take advantage of technology which can be very costly. This is why the other companies do not use this product, that prevents sod web worms

It is also the beginning of Chinch Bug season. From now until late October our technicians are extremely conscientious to ensure Chinch Bugs are managed or controlled so turf damage will not be evident. If Chinch Bugs are found on your property, treatment is made and followed up on to ensure control.

The rainy season typically makes our turf look great, but is also fuel for weed growth. We work diligently to control weeds in your



turf, on occasion weeds do get ahead of us, especially during rainy periods. Our technicians note these problems and follow ups are set to ensure weed control is achieved and monitored throughout the rainy season.

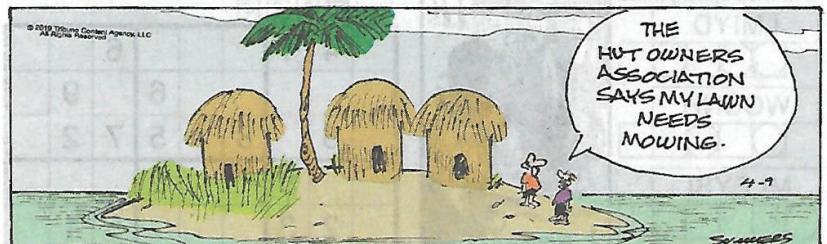
SHRUBS & TREES

MAGNOLIA TREES

Most Magnolia trees are going through spring leaf drop and blooming. This is a seasonal issue and as with all plants, blooming requires a lot of extra energy and the Magnolia seems to show this the most. Leaf drop and droop are the most common signs noticeable. By now all of our Magnolias should look normal again.

Bound & Gagged

By Dana Summers



IRRIGATION

For those of you that do not have our irrigation maintenance program we would like to remind you it is time to visually inspect your irrigation system. Here are some critical components.

1. Is the date and time correct?
2. Are you running on an A program? Do you have B, C, or D programs turned on adding extra water? Are they still needed? (some clocks have 1, 2, 3, & 4 as the program names)
3. Are all the zones set for your summer run times?
4. You should run a zone test and check all the heads. Are any plugged, broken, out of adjustment and so on?
5. If you have any weak spots on the property you should calibrate to be sure the area is getting $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. You can see more about calibration on our web site in the recommendations section.
6. If your controller requires a battery to maintain its settings during a power outage it is time to replace the battery.
7. It is a great time to record your zone settings. For example; Zone 1, Front Lawn, 30 minutes. Zone 2..... And so on.
8. Is your rain sensor functioning? Is it set properly? We recommend it be set at $\frac{1}{2}$ inch minimum and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch maximum. This will keep the system from shutting down if you only get a fast down pour that does not actually put much water in the soil.
9. If your clock has a "seasonal adjustment" we strongly recommend you have it at 100% in our area of the state.
10. If you pump water from a lake does the filter need cleaning?

For those of you that have our maintenance program all of this is already taken care of.

IT IS THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN

MILLIPEDES

Soon the rains will come and along with that will be our annual Millipede invasion. These insects all lay their eggs at about the same time of the year. The egg clutch can consist of hundreds of eggs. They all hatch at about the same time. They grow rapidly and when these pests are about 1 inch long they show up by the 1000's. It is a mass migration as they leave the area they were born and go off looking for new habitat. During these migrations you might find them all over your walks, the street, the house, and even some will get inside the home. Spraying for this pest helps but because it has a very hard exoskeleton and it does not clean itself it can take several hours for them to die after contacting a pesticide. To make matters worse there is a seemingly endless supply of them. After the invasion begins they finally disappear after 4 to 6 weeks. Treating the exterior of the home and doing some exclusion will greatly reduce the ones that get inside. Treating the lawn and shrubs does no good at all. The chemicals are designed to break down quickly and while a spray will kill the ones on your property at that very moment the next day they are replaced by 1000's more as the march continues. Millipedes are extremely frustrating and messy but they do not cause any damage and are not large enough at this point to bite or sting. Once inside, even without chemicals, they will die on their own because their bodies require high levels of moisture that they cannot find inside a structure.



ZOYSIA CUT DOWN PICTURES

We thought we would share the progression of a lawn getting its spring Cut Down. This lawn had gotten extremely tall so to get where the owner wanted to be, it had to be cut down before we could start service.

Picture 1. shows the height of the lawn in mid-March

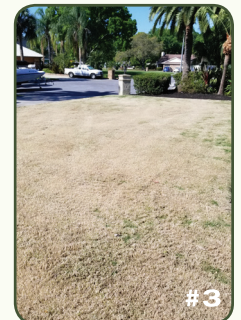
Picture 2. shows what the lawn looked like prior to the cut down. While it does not look bad it would be in horrible condition by July due to scalping and not being able to raise the mower higher.

Picture 3. Shows what the lawn looked like after the cut down. Believe it or not this was a beautiful sight as you will see next.

Picture 4. Shows the height of the grass post cut down.

Picture 5. Shows the lawn after 3 weeks of our care. It will just keep getting better.

The best part is this lawn will look like this until we get the first cold snap in the fall. Next year it will only need a buzz cut which is much easier and less costly.



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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



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SCHOOL'S OUT... WATCH OUT FOR CHILDREN!



INSTALLING NEW SHRUBS???

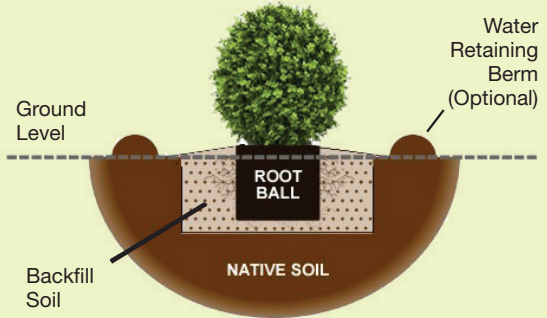
The potting material nurseries are using now is extremely porous. This allows the nursery to have greater control over nutrients and moisture resulting in a faster growth to market. This is something we just have to be aware of. It has always been the rule to bust up the root ball when installing a potted plant into soil. With this more porous potting material it is critical that this is done and done well to make sure the plants survive. (The exception would be annuals grown in potting soil) If that root ball is not broken up it will dry out faster than the soil around it causing great stress on the new plant.

If you have wilt on some but not all of a new install, hand watering with a garden hose directly into the root ball once or twice a week will save you from replacing plants that dry out. This might only be needed for a month or 2 while the plant grows new roots.

Always remember; never install a plant so the root flares are below grade level. You can plant them to shallow with no ill effect but even a little too deep can be devastating months or years down the road.



Always Break Up The Root Ball



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