

# VOICE OF QUALITY

NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2021



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**

## MESSAGE FROM

*Jeff*

## SPRING INTO SUMMER 21

I love the spring. A fresh new beginning. I really appreciate the flush of new growth in our shrubs and trees. So soft and tender with all the colors of green. This year was especially enjoyable with the coolest winter we have seen in 25 years our shrubs and trees had some actual down time. Time to rest and replenish nutritional reserves resulting in the beautiful pop of new growth and color once the temperatures told us spring is here!

With the flush of growth in our spring so goes the beginning of our bug season. Bugs love the tender new growth and our effort to control these pests becomes non-stop throughout the summer and into the fall. Selective problems are always a challenge in our landscapes. We continue to work diligently to resolve these issues in an effective and timely manner. Some of these issues are easy to resolve with one application, others seem to get more challenging each and every season. We do have what we consider "a lot of tools in the shed". This includes application techniques and frequency to changing chemistries to throw the problem a curve ball. This is also an important part of our effort to not use products repeatedly, as to not build resistance.

Spring is typically one of our drier seasons of the year. The benefit is we still control our water, as typically we do not have much rain or humidity. The challenge is ensuring we water effectively to be able to enjoy the beautiful green that comes with our turf and shrubs. As always, our turf is the most demanding, requiring water frequency as the soil begins to dry out as temperatures drive the need for water. With the roller coaster of temperatures, we go through each spring it becomes very challenging to give you an effective water strategy. Important factors to consider after we go from 1 X weekly to 2 X weekly are the zone run times, days you can water,

time of day to water, and do you need an additional program to hydrate plants (primarily turf) in the afternoon. April is a very challenging month as the sun is directly over-head and humidity is typically low. This is when plants and turf can dehydrate quickly. I am not sure if you notice, but if you are an outdoor person as I am, I usually get my first sunburn early in April as the angle of the sun has changed, days get longer and our skin is not ready. Spring is also our granular fertilizer season for our turf and shrubs. This is one of our more visually impactful applications of the year. This brings our turf and shrubs out of their down season, and is where we see the most lateral growth of turf for the whole year. This is the time of year we work the hardest to get our turf to pull together from the challenges we encountered from the last summer and fall related turf issues.

Last year at this time we were facing the unknown with Covid. One year removed there appears to be a light at the end of the tunnel. I don't know about you but I will be glad to see an end! I do not like wearing a mask, but I do until I know it is safe, especially indoors. I do believe in the vaccine and by the time you are reading this I will be fully vaccinated and hope all of you get access to vaccinations.

I hope and pray for the day that life is back to normal, as normal as can be.



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# LOVE / HATE ZOYSIA CONTINUED

In our last newsletter we wrote in detail concerning many of the challenges that go into caring for zoysia turf. In this newsletter we are going to detail the benefits and enjoyment of our zoysia turf.

I believe one of the truest benefits is its drought tolerance. This does not mean it needs less water. What it truly means is your irrigation can go down, or we get no rain and your zoysia goes completely brown. It has not died but just been forced to become dormant. All you have to do is begin watering and add a little fertilizer and it will grow back green. If it were St. Augustine, you would be sodding a dead spot. You should "never" have to replace your zoysia turf.

I believe zoysia is much easier to maintain mowing at 1 1/2 inches. It is much easier to cut and produces less debris to get rid of during maintenance season.

Edging zoysia although very important can be done every other week reducing maintenance time in your yard. It is a good idea to edge deeply to prevent zoysia from growing into bed areas but it is inevitable that it will, but is easily managed with round-up or some mechanical means.

Over all appearance although not as green as St Augustine, a well-manicured zoysia lawn is beautiful most of the year.

"Bare Footable". If any of you and your kids like to play or relax in your grass, zoysia's soft nature is the best it can be. If any one of you has the pleasure of playing or rolling in St. Augustine you understand why zoysia is considered "Bare Footable".

We also have the ability to control certain weeds in our zoysia turf that are not controllable in St Augustine.

We can even control St Augustine intruding

in your zoysia.

As with all turf grass we have many challenges and benefits. It is honestly a preference issue on your part. Our job is to educate and inform you to the best level of our ability to make the best choice for your landscape site.



## 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.

## DEAD TREES

One of the saddest parts of our job is to tell a customer that a plant or tree is dead. The vast majority of the time it is from age, lightning strike, or even installation depth from 20 years ago. Some feel like they have lost an old friend when a large plant dies.

Here is a very hard part to understand. The larger a plant is the more sap it has. While the plant may show symptoms something has happened, it takes a hot dry spell to finish the plant off. Even worse is when a tree seems to lose all its foliage in a week

or 2 or turns golden brown. It looked pretty good a few weeks ago, what happened?

Typically, the problems listed above cause the vascular system of the plant to stop functioning. It may have been hit with the primary issue a year or more ago. The plant was no longer able to take up nutrients or water but all the sap has to dry up before the tree turns brown. We come out of a cool winter and come to that very first hot week or 2 with low humidity and bam, you get up one morning and are looking at a dead, brown plant. The life cycle

for that plant is over. Sometimes it is obvious why and other times too complicated for anyone to ever know with absolute certainty what killed the plant.

As you drive around look at the trees. It is very common to see large dead trees that got hit by lightning last year, 2020 and have just turned brown. It was the 3 weeks of drought stress at the end of March 2021 that finally put them over the edge. Resulting in dead trees standing out like a sore thumb amidst all the pretty green new growth of spring.

## 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.

## DEAD TURF & PLANTS

This drought damage happens no less than 4 times a year. Every year! WHY?

Irrigation is extremely tricky. Every head that sprays water can be different. A simple thing like 1 head getting changed with the wrong output GPM (Gallons Per Minute Flow) can change everything on that zone. Use a low GPM head and all the other heads have high pressure. Use a high GPM head and all the other heads have no pressure. This whole process requires calibration to result in an efficient system.

If you have a picture of your property that is 5 or more years old look at it and compare it to now. We don't notice the subtle changes that occur year after year, but it happens. How can the environment change and no changes be made to the irrigation system and still have an efficient irrigation system? It can't and ends in bad spots.

Your entire irrigation system is made of plastic of one sort or the other. Water

is abrasive which alone will wear out parts. There are also gears, springs, washers, and gaskets in those heads. They too are plastic and wear out.

A major problem is the system is put in with no real thought to the environment.

We can all agree you need more water in direct sun than in shade. If all the heads are on 1 zone and they all have the same GPM it only makes total sense that you will end up overwatering or underwatering. Overwatering results in huge water bills. Underwatering results in dead plant material. If your irrigation person never talks about calibration and balancing the system you may have the wrong person.

A good irrigation system will always need updates and maintenance. You may spend a little more on the system but you will save on the water bills and damage repairs caused by drought damage.

## IRRIGATION RUN PROGRAMING

Twice per week is our current watering restriction but is it enough during this very hot and dry season? There are a lot of alternative watering programs you might want to try, as all your yards and systems have their own unique characteristics.

Watering in the early morning is the best cultural practice as it does not extend the natural wet period of our turf. Approximately 2 AM until the dawn hits the grass is optimal.

B – Programs allow us to isolate zones or areas that need additional hydration due to poor coverage or new landscape added. A multitude of B – Programs exist, most commonly 1 extra day a week to possibly every day depending on your situation.

Afternoon hydration is ideal to alleviate stress during the hottest time of day, 3 -4 PM. This can be done during a 2 times per week program by adding on no water days usually Monday or Tuesday. In some cases, maybe even every day of the week is needed.

You also may have the opportunity to run C and D programs. This allows you multiple options for different scenarios for your landscape water needs.

The Racchio clock is another option to aid in monitoring your clock / zone operation. Please keep in mind some of the options on this clock may not be best for use in our area. Also keep in mind that a Racchio clock completely locks us out to check issues in your system.

These additional programs should only be practiced if necessary and should be discontinued as soon as our rainy season starts. If you have further questions in regards to an alternative program please contact our office so we can advise.

## NEW PAYMENT OPTION

We've got exciting news! Quality First is now offering the option of paying for your services via Zelle®!

Zelle® is a fast, safe and easy way to send and receive money with friends, family and local businesses you trust!

Interested?

First things first: If you don't currently have Zelle®, download the app. on your smart phone.

Then add Steve@qualityfirstcares.com to your contacts.

In the space provided for the first Name (enter): Quality First Lawn and Shrub.

In the space provided for the last name, leave it blank.

Then input the amount owed and submit!

Simple...right?

In the event you run into any issues our office staff is here to help!

We are always available via phone at 407-737-1889; Monday-Friday 8am-5pm.

**407-737-1889 • We Care!**



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FLORIDA

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March 26, 2021

To Lawn Care and Landscape Service Providers,

We are notifying you that effective January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021 additional fertilizer restrictions are be in effect within the City of Maitland during the restricted season of June 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup>.

Per City Ordinance 1369, adopted June 8, 2020, no person shall apply fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorus to turf or landscape plants during the restricted season. Whereas the fertilizer regulations within Orange County provide an exception for certified applicators, the City ordinance removes that exception and prohibits all applicators per the restrictions.

The City regulates landscape maintenance practices throughout the year. Homeowners, landscapers, and lawn care service providers must follow the practices outlined in the City Code to protect water quality. As a reminder, a twenty-five-foot fertilizer free shoreline protection area is required wherein no fertilizers or non-aquatic use pesticide shall be applied. The twenty-five-foot setback shall be established upland from the normal high water elevation.

We appreciate your compliance with our City Code. For more information, please visit City of Maitland's website at [www.itsmymaitland.com](http://www.itsmymaitland.com) or contact me at 407-539-6203.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Ryan Sullivan

Surface Water Coordinator



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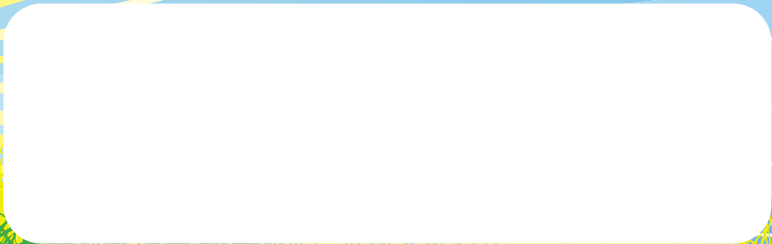
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**May 31, 2021**

**We Care**  
**407-737-1889**

**EMAIL THE EDITOR** ~ Do you have a question or comment you would like addressed in an upcoming newsletter?  
Send them to [lynn@qualityfirstcares.com](mailto:lynn@qualityfirstcares.com)



E/O MPS 407-657-7414 QF-NL01 04/21

## **MAITLAND CITY HAS THEIR OWN RULES**

In this newsletter you will find a letter we received that covers information that only affects residents with a Maitland address. This letter covers new regulations that have been put in place where anyone and everyone will be violating the law if we don't abide. You Maitland folks need to take a close look at this material as it is going to have a big effect on the condition of your property and our ability to care for it. The letter does include the contact information for some of your local government officials.

Everyone else needs to beware as this could happen in your neighborhood as well and you are the only ones that can do anything about it.

Our industry is regulated by the federal government and the state government "Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, Rodenticide Act" (FIFRA), the "Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services", (FDACS) and local municipalities. It has always been possible for a local municipality to require more regulations than the others but never less. The plain truth is that all commercial applicators complete training required by FDACS and FIFRA and we obey the regulations they set, using SCIENCE to determine what is best for our state. Some others be it ill-informed or possibly even ignorant of the SCIENCE, determine they will add regulations to make their area of control "better off". This is all more suitable for a different platform however it is affecting many and likely will only continue to become more of an issue for all, as others continue to make decisions based on feelings opposed to science and proven facts.

Here are the bullet points of the letter;

- The restricted season is June 1st to September 30th.
- No person shall apply fertilizer containing nitrogen or phosphorus during the restricted season.
- No fertilizer or non-aquatic use pesticide will ever be applied any closer than 25 foot from any shoreline. (The word pesticide covers weeds, insects, fungus, and any other "pest")

For years now we have operated under Greens Industry Best Management Practices (GI-BMP). We never apply lawn fertilizer with phosphorous in it. We provide a minimum of a 6 ft buffer from shorelines based on slope and risk. We never allow fertilizer or any chemical to be applied on a non-target site. But we still are able to do what is needed to prevent turf loss that will result in additional erosion and runoff into our waterways. In Maitland we have just lost our control during the most stressful time of the year for your property.

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