

# VOICE OF QUALITY

NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2021



## A MESSAGE FROM *Jeff*

It's hard to believe but yet another year has almost passed us by!

With the holidays approaching fast, there seems to be little time to get everything done. Many of us look forward to this time of the year. Cooler temperatures allow us all to start venturing back out into our gardens. Family and friends want to get out of the cold in the north and visit the warmth and sun of Florida.

This also becomes a challenging time of year as we want our landscapes to look their best for our guest and the holiday season. Many factors come into play that will help or challenge the making of your landscape looking its best. One huge challenge is the dreaded fungus pops up and we have little to no time to correct this issue. Irrigation practices for the upcoming season are a major contributor to problems. Too much or frequent watering will allow fungus to establish and grow. Too little water and the turf can dry up and turn brown with very little season left to recover. In this newsletter we outline several watering schedules that may be best for your property. There is no cookie cutter application of one schedule fits all. Many of you have been through this seasonal change. If you do need assistance in what works best for your property you can ask your technician or call the office and we can advise you on what would be best for your landscape.

As you receive our last newsletter for this year our weather has changed considerably. In late August our rain virtually stopped for approximately 10 days. This was brutal as our temperatures stayed in the upper 90's with a heat index topping out at 105\* to 110\*.

That is HOT!

Our turf grass is the major plant hurt by this event. Fortunately, we weathered this period and our granular lawn fertilizer season began in September, so most heat stressed lawns have recovered by now. The rainy season came to an abrupt end around September the 20th. As the rainy season started late it also ended early. I am ok with that, as it is all of the rain that wreaks havoc with our landscape.

I have been monitoring rainfall at my home since early June. It was an eye-opening amount of rain for me from the early days of June. We received virtually no rain at all from Jan through May. In June I received 18 ¾ inch of rain, July 19 ½ inch of rain, August was 12 inch of rain, through the 3rd week of September we received 16 ½ inch rain for a grand total of 66 ¾ inch of rain. WOW! We are supposed to average 50 – 53 inches of rain annually. I know this is unofficial but this does give us an insight on why we can and do have so many issues during our rainy season.

To all of our gardeners the rainy season is helpful. It waters our orchids, hanging plants, and potted plants, essentially giving us some down time. Now that the rain has stopped, we must reengage our efforts to water these plants to keep them looking their best. Do not forget to fertilize your container plants this time of year to ensure a beautiful look for the holidays. It may even be time to freshen up some of the containers used for potted plants.





## SERVICES

This time of the year gives us room in the newsletter to make mention of all the services we offer. Many times, we hear we thought you guys just sprayed grass. Well, we have the ability to do much more and hope that should something arise that you will give us the chance to prove we are good at much more.

We are able to provide;

Lawn & Shrub Care, Irrigation repairs and maintenance, Indoor Pest Control for Inside & Out, Mosquito Control, Termite Control, we even provide soil Aeration, Top Dressing, pH Management, and other specialty type work.

We wish you and your families the very best and Happiest Holiday Season



## DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME WATERING

This is the time of year we are all told to set the irrigation down to 1 time weekly by our municipalities and water conservation groups. Some landscapers, lawn companies, and even irrigation companies will often say the same thing. It is the easiest way out. This always creates issues.

Depending on temperatures, plant material, and conditions at your property this may not be frequent enough. All properties are different and you may know your property better than anyone so reduce to what you feel comfortable with. We have outlined a somewhat effective irrigation program for our seasonal situations. This plan is outside of water restrictions, so it is up to you on setting your frequency. Supplementing as needed especially under particular conditions will be necessary, especially around large Oak trees as there is a lot of moisture competition. It is also a lot more work keeping up with our containerized plants. Drip irrigation works great to help keep up with this issue.

Watering regimen for November through March as a standard rule of thumb.

November – every 4th or 5th day to 1 x per week	December – every 5th day to 1 x per week
January – 1 x per week	February – 1 x per week
March – begin 2 times per week	

These frequencies are dependent on daily temperatures. The cooler the season the less frequently water is required. As always if you have any questions please do not hesitate to call for more information and a more specific guide to water your individual property.





## IRRIGATION

During the rainy summer months, it is important to maintain our irrigation systems, so when it stops raining the system will function properly. It is during the rainy season that many folks shut the irrigation off to save money and also save on this precious resource. It is when we shut it off for an extended period of time that issues can and will develop. Plants grow to the point that they are blocking irrigation heads, heads do not pop up out of the grass because the grass has grown over the top of them, heads do not want to go back down, heads get broken from maintenance or possible from playing in the yard. These are issues seen routinely by our irrigation technicians and also by your lawn technicians as they service your property. Please take the time to visually inspect your system at least 1 time per month to ensure all is functioning properly. On a side note the new wireless rain sensors work fantastic. They shut the system down when you get rain and they allow the system to work when the rain stops. The biggest advantage is a rain sensor does not forget until issues arise to turn the system back on.



## LEAF DROP SEASON

This is the beginning of leaf drop season. As a reminder leaf blowers do cause a lot of damage to tender plant tissue. The air pushed from the average blower can exceed 140 mph. It is ok to have some leaves on the ground in your shrub beds. The blower shreds and desiccates leaf tissue severely affecting the aesthetics of your plants. Please talk with your landscaper so they take the time to watch what and where they are blowing. Blowers are usually the suspect if your mulch disappears during the year. Look under and behind your plants, it is probably piled up against the plant trunk and walls of your home. These piles should be cleaned and leveled back out as too much leaf litter can affect nutritional and fungicide treatments and also may block moisture from reaching the ground in the root zone.





## FLOWERING PLANTS

In this article we are going to talk about Flowering Plants. Fall, which is finally here, is the best time to enjoy our blooming plants. With the weather change bringing cooler nights and warm days “not too hot.”

We see a dramatic change in our landscape plants. Gardenia's budding and blooming. These also have a lot of leaf drop this time of year or yellowing foliage. Be prepared for Camellias which are so prolific and showy. These are my favorite plants, to watch change. It is not uncommon for a plant to not bloom along with the rest. It could be the soil, its age, the way it was pruned and when, it gets just a little more or less sun. We always apply the proper nutrients to your plants based on the plant. These environmental conditions are not so controllable. So if you have that one plant that just does not bloom, do a comparison with the others and you might think of an event or cause that can be corrected. By the way, sometimes Mother Nature is just having an effect.

There are numerous other blooming plants; Roses, Bougainvillea, Mandevilla, Bromeliads, Susanqua Camelia, Crown of Thorns, Hamelia-Colusa (Humming Bird Bush), Tea Olive, Beautyberry, Hibiscus, Fashion, Vivid, and Duc de Rohan Azaleas, Oleander, Tibouchina, Thryallis, Jatropa, Downy and Angelwing Jasmine, Asian Snow, Buttercup, Poinsettia, and Christmas Cactus, Plumbago. And Crotons with their many varieties are always colorful. Even some of the trees are blooming like Silk Floss, Cassia, and Bottle Brush.

We strive throughout the year to keep all your plants healthier, pest, and disease free. Applying our custom granular fertilizer 2x a year and our shrub spray throughout the season. It is also important to understand that some buds and blooms are very sensitive to sprays. During this season we pay close attention to this and if a plant has a problem we will carefully determine if it is serious or if it can wait until the blooming season is over. If we do see a problem we will let you know we are aware and what the best option is to keep the plant healthy. Enjoy your blooming plants throughout Fall and The Holiday season.



## MOWER CUTTING BLADE SETTINGS

We have already had several really bad issues resulting from landscapers lowering the mower on St Augustine grass. This is extremely stressful to the lawn. It results in damage. In some cases, it thins the lawn out so bad it will not recover.

The leaf blade is what gives us color and also is the part of the plant that is critical to producing photosynthesis. This changes sun into sugar and starches to feed the plant. Take this part of the plant away and recovery is slow and the grass looks horrible.

PLEASE, please keep your mowers set at 3.5 to 4 inches. It makes the turf look better and is critical to keep it alive in the shade. Never cut large areas of grass with a string trimmer. It is certain death.







## DOES YOUR ZOYSIA LAWN LOOK LIKE THIS?

If so, you have a disease named Pythium Blight.

The common name is Root Rot because the root system is affected to the point that it stops moving nutrients and moisture through the plant. It is like having a lawn with no roots and because of this it has to take all its moisture through the leaf tissue. This is very much like when a new lawn is installed and requires lots of extra water. This disease typically affects our Zoysia grass in late June and into July. When identified we treat with the only product made to control this disease, fertilize, and start following up to insure control is accomplished. By this time of the year we usually have the grass completely grown back in. The problem this year is this disease did not show up until late August and into September. To make matters worse it stopped raining in September. Normally the afternoon rains in June and July dramatically improve the recovery because the foliage is kept hydrated during the hottest part of the day.



One thing that you can do to help resolve this problem is to set up a B Program on your irrigation controller. Setting up only the zone that waters the affected area for 10 to 15 minutes each day between 3 and 5 in the afternoon. Keep in mind that the disease came about from the soil in the root zone staying saturated for too long. So, running the irrigation on the whole property creates a situation where you could end up with the disease in other areas of the lawn. Once the grass begins to recover and green back up start cutting the B program back. Maybe run it every other day and then every 3rd day and finally stop the extra water.

This will be a very challenging time of year to push the lawn back to full health and to make matters worse we begin Brown Patch Fungus season in November. The biggest driver of disease in turf such as Pythium and Brown Patch is the soil is staying saturated too long. All plants need the soil to dry out a little before water is added again. We cannot control mother nature but we can control our irrigation system.

Please be sure to review the irrigation recommendations in this newsletter.

Also be assured that if you have a Pythium Blight issue, we have treated it properly, insured the roots are healing and simply need time for everything to start growing again. It is also important to understand the if addressed properly these diseases seldom kill the grass.



Very often we are told, "That spot gets Brown Patch fungus every year. Why can't you prevent it from showing up"?

Here is the answer. The chemicals we have available to us last for only a few days to a few weeks depending on the product used. Rest assured we use the products that last for a few weeks which most companies do not use, due to the extremely high cost. What prevents us from being proactive is that we never know when the disease will start. Also, we cannot over apply these products because the disease could become resistant making it impossible to control. We have to wait until we see symptoms before we can treat.

## DISEASE OR BUGS?

Some new talking points about browning areas in Zoysia is that some will tell you it is not Pythium Blight but instead a bug called "Tuttle Mealy Bug". Yes, this bug is present in most all of our Zoysia lawns. I for one have not found that this is the issue causing the damage. If it were just a bug then why when the bug is controlled does the grass not recover in a shorter 2-to-3-week time frame. Like a minor chinch bug infestation recovery happens in a few weeks. I also can't believe with our service schedule and timely insecticide applications this problem could develop to a population that could cause large damage areas. I have been in this industry for 35 years and have always been very involved in all aspects of service and just cannot wrap my head around it is only mealy bugs causing large areas of damaged grass. Many of our zoysia yards are in slow recovery or getting closer to recovery. We changed some of the chemistry and for all purposes believe we are getting through this difficult problem and will work to continue to work until corrected.



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## REMINDER

**Daylight Savings Time!**  
**Time To Resume**  
**Once - A - Week Watering**

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

R/O MPS 407-657-7414 QF-NL01 10/21

### PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN

A year ago, we were embroiled in politics and an election. No matter what side of the aisle you reside on I would like to take this time to remind all of us We are all Americans. We live in the greatest country in the world today. It is all of our responsibility to work hard for our country even with the many flaws that we may have. No one person, county, state, or country is perfect. We must all strive each day to be a better person and a better American.

I believe in America and I am living the American dream. I came from meager beginnings in rural Minnesota and have worked hard to become who I am and who Quality First has become. I served my country for 4.5 years in the army infantry airborne. (All the way)

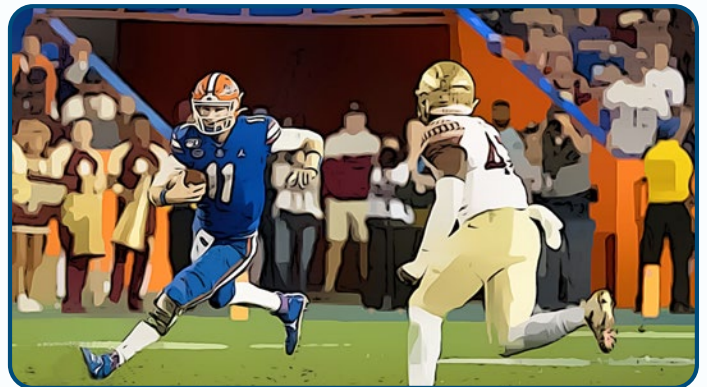
I am a proud American and I hope all of you are!

I was taught by my parents that nothing comes easy but through hard work and persistence all good things will come.

Thank You, to all of our customers for allowing all of us at Quality First to be part of your family. God Bless America.

P.S. and thank God for college football.

Jeff Melmer



### EMAIL THE EDITOR

Do you have a question or comment you would like addressed in an upcoming newsletter?  
Send them to the editor at: [Lynn@QualityFirstCares.com](mailto:Lynn@QualityFirstCares.com)

Some of the information in our newsletter may be repetitive throughout the year.

As things change from season to season and year to year we come across these issues as they repeat themselves.

With respect to all our long term customers it is good to refresh our memories from season to season but also to let all of our new customers in on the information.

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