



# Southern Care Lawns

## GrowingGreen NewsLetter

A quarterly horticultural report on what's happening in the Tampa Bay landscapes.

By: Mike Noblin, Horticulturist/Owner – Spring 2010

### WINTER LAWN DAMAGE

This winter was the second harshest in recorded Florida history.

As the temperatures continue to warm up (finally!), your turf is progressively recovering. Almost every lawn, no matter its health, has some extent of winter damage. This may be noticeable as thinning, discoloration, patch work spots of browning throughout the lawn, surrounded by lush grass. In some areas, even crab grasses and other wild grass were killed entirely from the cold.

Unfortunately, the extreme cold temperatures were beyond our control. In severe cases, some plugging or sod may be needed. Most of the damage has or will recover by filling in from the surrounding grass or from sprouting of uncontrollable wild grasses, like Bermuda. Bermuda and other wild grasses have no chemical treatment available when they infiltrate a St. Augustine based lawn.

We have had several situations of clients questioning our "notes" or

diagnoses of lawn winter damage within their lawn. We write these newsletters to help educate our clients and give them a better understanding of lawn care. Many clients think it is "chinch bugs" or "fungus", when in reality these damaged areas have been there all along and are only becoming more noticeable as the grass around these areas becomes greener-providing a more noticeable contrast.

We understand your issue with the winter damaged areas and we are doing everything on our end to speed recovery. Remember, we have had only three weeks of warm weather and St. Augustine is a "warm season grass", meaning when temperatures are 80 degrees or below, growth is minimal.

Our diagnoses are accurate, and as co-owner and a horticulturist, I have 30 years experience alone. Together, as a group, we have over sixty years of lawn care experience. More importantly, we base our business on honesty and trust. We may not always tell you what you want to hear, but you can be assured it is accurate and honest,

and if we tell you we will do something, we will stand by our word.

Neither chinch bugs nor fungus are currently active and certainly not during the winter. Consecutive nights of extreme cold did some damage to your lawn and it will take some time to fully recover in these areas.

We appreciate your patience in allowing the natural growth process to occur.

### MOISTURE MANAGER

Again we will be offering two (2) supplemental applications of Moisture Manager during the dry season. The response we had last season was excellent and many of you have either called or sent us notes asking for it again. Nationwide, the product has really taken off and unfortunately, due to that, the manufacturer has raised our cost. Therefore, last season's prices will increase by 20%. If you are interested in the applications, please call ASAP to schedule as we will have limited time to order the product. Go to our web site at: [www.southerncarelawns.com](http://www.southerncarelawns.com) and view the animated video of how it works and

how it can save you money!

### SHRUB PRUNING

Those plants that suffered cold injury are now setting new leaves (if they survived), and will likely need another trimming to remove more dead wood you didn't get the first time. The list is long, but plants like Star Jasmine, Croton, Ixora, Ti, Alamanda, Gold Mound, Hibiscus and Scheffera will likely need a clean up to remove unsightly dead wood and force new growth to emerge!

### PALMS

In the last newsletter we discussed the many palms grown in our area that are not recommended for our area and the chance they could be damaged by extreme cold. Well it happened!

Robellini, Foxtail, Areac and Christmas Palms were severely damaged this winter by extreme cold on consecutive nights. Many Foxtail, most all Christmas and some Robellini will not recover. In all cases it will be a few months before they look decent



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again, and will need the entire year to fully recover.

So, next time, it is best to choose less tropical and more cold hardy palms. Windmill, European Fan, Saw Palmetto, Washingtonia, Bismark and Pindo Palms are **excellent**, cold hardy replacements that are also attractive.

### BOUGAINVILLEAS

The winter has damaged Bougainvilleas so severely it is likely their bloom this year and next will either be minimal or none at all. They should be pruned after blooming, but the extreme cold's severity forced a more severe pruning somewhat before the natural bloom for this year. They will need time to recover as will everything else.

Remember, Azaleas should also be trimmed after bloom and not after July 1<sup>st</sup>. Light trimming can be done, but will minimize flower development for next year. Azaleas should be in partial shade and **out of direct sun**. Stresses created by full sun exposure will draw lace bugs to feed and damage new leaves. Plantings under pine or oaks are excellent locations.

Avoid planting along the house or near windows where regular shearing is necessary so blooms are not inhibited.

### CHECK YOUR IRRIGATION SYSTEM

The dry season is now here and we are seeing dry spots appear in area lawns once again.

The severe winter damage your lawn experienced will be exemplified in accentuated drought stress where water deficiencies or soil inadequacies are present.

Our native sand based soils have poor water holding capacity, poor nutrient holding ability, and a propensity to dry out quickly and reabsorb water poorly once dried out. This makes proper irrigation maintenance and usage a must.

Obviously, full sun areas should receive the most water. Settings should be adjusted as to the type of irrigation head used (i.e. rotor, popup, etc.). Each emits varying quantities of water. Every zone should be measured (see our web site) with shallow containers for 15 minutes. This quantity should equal 1" of water

total; over the designated time it takes your system to supply the 1". This is the time needed by your system, in that particular zone of that specific irrigation head, thus the setting.

Cleaning out clogged heads and readjusting spray patterns gone awry from being stepped on or hit with mowers are regular needs of your irrigation system to minimize dry spots.

It is critical that you regularly trim St. Augustine runners out of your irrigation head cement donuts. Runners grow across the heads quickly and inhibit the proper movement of the irrigation head, many times limiting range of motion and vertical pop up motions. Simply spraying the areas with round up will stop further growth, but not stop the strong hold the runners have.

### QUESTIONS AND PAYMENTS

If you have questions pertaining to your account, and not lawn questions, please call Barbara, our business manager, at 727-849-2700. Barbara has all of your account information

at her fingertips and will be glad to assist.

Send payments to P.O. Box 57, **not** the Oak Street address. This will ensure we receive and post your payment in a timely manner. Your payment is due 30 days after each application. Please leave a few days leeway for mailing time. A \$5.00 finance charge is added when payments are received after 30 days. Be sure your invoice number is on your check when using Billpay, to ensure the payment is applied to the correct invoice. Statements are sent out only if there is a past due amount owed.

If you have questions or comments or would like to see a particular subject talked about in the next quarter of GrowingGreen, please feel free to contact me at 727-810-2273.