



Southern Care Lawns

GrowingGreen Newsletter

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

By: Mike Noblin, Horticulturist/Owner - Winter 2009

THANK YOU!

The entire Southern Care Lawns family wishes to thank all of our customers for your patronage in 2009. In these tough economic times lawn and landscape care are not always a top priority. We feel we are an important part in keeping your home's value and appearance up. We appreciate your continued loyalty with us for your lawn care needs!

STOPPING DURING THE WINTER?

Why a customer should not stop our service during the winter.

We understand financial issues, the holidays, etc.- but remember weeds still grow -usually more so- due to the slow growth of St. Augustine during the cooler winter months, which allows more intrusion of the weeds into the St Augustine grass areas. Also, insects are still present, and fungus, especially, Brown Patch Fungus which can be a huge issue during our coolest months.

We work hard all year to provide the maximum results we can with each lawn. Stopping the service for a few months leads to increased weeds, disease, etc. and

a decline in turf health. When service is resumed, your money does less, because in essence, we are starting over again. Consider this before stopping: It's only a couple of treatments. Is it really worth it? Let's keep your lawn looking great!

FIVE WEEK SERVICES

Our services are every five weeks. From over 30 years of experience diagnosing and applying products to lawn and ornamentals in the Bay Area this is the most effective time between visits. It provides the best results and more importantly, the most **value** for your money. Intervals of six and eight weeks previously offered by us will no longer be available, with the exception of pre-existing program customers.

In Florida too much can happen too quickly within several days. Pest controls are not as they were years ago. Insects have developed a resistance to products and the ratios used by large lawn care companies, therefore causing the need for shorter spans between applications and a greater problem with insect population control.

Long term products, for the most part, are a thing of the past and are being monitored and sanctioned closely by the EPA and state regulators.

Therefore, we feel this is the best frequency of applications to protect your lawn, your home and your investment.

We give you the best results and the best value because we spend time on your lawn with each application.

20/20 REFERRAL PROGRAM

Most of you have received a flyer outlining our 20/20 referral. Simply refer someone to us, and if they become a regular customer you both will receive a \$20.00 discount on your next application. Please make sure that you let us know who and when this referral was made. A credit will then be automatically issued on your account. Your referral of our services is the greatest compliment we can receive, and this is our way of saying THANK YOU for your business.

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.

Please send payments to P.O. Box 57, **NOT** to the Oak Street address. This will ensure we receive 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.

"MY LAWN COULDN'T BE DRY, I WATER"

Occasionally we are called to a home to investigate a customer's issue with their lawn.

Although chinch bugs are quite prominent in our area, most of the time these calls relate directly only to "inadequate watering" or "drought stress" situations.

When you irrigate your lawn follow the watering restrictions of once per



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week; although many times this is not enough to supply the needs of the turf. Most lawns can tolerate the irrigating of once per week, but it must be customized to your yard and its light, mowing, soil and irrigation system specifics.

The majority of calls we receive about lawn "brown areas" are water related. Educating the customer that a once per week watering for 15 to 20 minutes per zone in May just won't work and why is an ongoing issue, especially when water prices are high and you receive a \$200+/month water bill. Here are some things to consider when setting your irrigation timers:

- What time of year is it?
- Is the zone you are setting in full sun or shade?
- Is it a rotary sprinkler or a pop up? They emit different amounts of water!
- Is it lawn or turf this zone covers? Established shrubs need much less water than turf.
- What is your soil base – sandy or muck? Is your soil light in color or dark? Dark soils hold more

organic matter and clays absorb and hold water longer. Light, sandy soils have large particles and very poor water holding capacity (there is quite a lot of air space between particles allowing the soil to dry out).

- What is your mowing height? It should be 3.5" to 4.5" for St. Augustine.
- What time of the year is it? In the heat of the summer you will need more. From November until March water only as needed. Manually start and shut off you irrigation.

SOUTHERN CARE LAWNS!- NOT SOUTHERN GREEN OR SOUTHERN LAWN AND LANDSCAPE

We truly appreciate your referrals; however we have encountered some confusion between our company, Southern Care Lawns, and others with a similar name. Due to the confusion, we have received calls from less than satisfied homeowners with serious lawn issues that were never corrected. These homeowners had signed up for service with another company with a similar name thinking they were a customer of ours.

We have no affiliation with the other companies. As our name states, we are SOUTHERN CARE LAWNS. Please be sure you are referring your friend, relative or neighbor to the company that CARES. Southern Care Lawns takes pride in servicing our lawns and landscapes with the results you want. 727-810-2273.

BROWN PATCH FUNGUS

Brown Patch Fungus is expected to be bad this fall and winter.

As temperatures cool, the likelihood of Brown Patch Fungus becoming present in the lawns in our area increases.

This fungus can be detrimental to your St. Augustine lawn or at the very least, make it a temporary eyesore, by ravaging it with brown/orange circular rings. It is most prominent in heavy shade or poorly drained areas. It will be accentuated by over irrigating and becomes more active as temperatures hover at 80 degrees and below.

The heavy normal summer rain this year, along with the forecast of a cool, wet fall, and the

forecasted El Nino weather pattern will increase the likelihood of the disease.

If and when it appears on your lawn, we will treat it with the appropriate fungicide to stop its growth. It will take time with your normal mowing patterns (less in winter) for the disease to be removed. We will monitor it as we service your lawn this winter.

MULCHING THE GOOD AND THE BAD WAY

Mulching your landscape beds provides not only an aesthetically pleasing look to your landscape, but it also suppresses weeds, conserves soil moisture and maintains a favorable soil temperature for roots to grow.

A layer of 3" of the mulch of your choice should be applied around the plants.

Remember: Mulch should never be piled up against the plant stems and should always be an area left "mulch free" directly around the stem. If mulch is piled up against the plant stem, the likelihood of disease or decline becoming present is very high. Moisture left against the



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tissue under the mulch will lead to progressive vascular decline. This is more common with certain plant species.

MOISTURE MANAGER OFFERED AGAIN THIS YEAR – WATER RESTRICTIONS ARE COMING!

We will again be offering the supplemental MOISTURE MANAGER applications this year.

This product maximizes your irrigation and rainfall utilization with chemical reactions in the soil after application. For detailed information on this product, please visit our web site at www.southerncaRELAWNS.com.

Use of this product last spring resulted in the minimization of drought injury, improved color and reduced chinch bug issues. This product will actually save you money on your irrigation bill by applying less water, having it better utilized in the soil and reducing evaporation.

Three applications, eight weeks apart, beginning in early March, will be made. Each treatment is roughly the cost of your regular lawn application

This product will not eliminate dryness, but it

will reduce the severity. Simply call us or enclose a note on the bottom of your invoice to be scheduled for this supplemental treatment.

COLD INJURY

We are entering the season where our cold sensitive ornamental plants may become injured from periods of cold. The severity of damage will be determined by: a) Plant specie; b) Health of plant at time of injury; c) Time exposed to cold; d) Low temperature minimum; and e) Method of protection.

First and foremost, planting the right plant for your area is your best method of avoiding damage. Now planting that “right” plant in the “right” place it prefers is the next step. Be sure to match your plant preferences to the planting location in your yard.

Second, following proper maintenance practices on your plants will determine “extent of recovery”. In other words, don't trim your cold sensitive hibiscus from 5' to 2' in November. Leave that plant with as much foliage as possible on it, going into cold spells. The overhanging foliage

will protect underlying tissue beneath and give you more plant to trim back in the spring, greatly speeding recovery. Should you want to try and protect your plants, use blankets and sheets that hang all the way to the ground, trapping ground heat inside the blanket. Don't use plastic as it creates condensation and will cause more damage. Try and keep protective coverings off the leaves using wooden stakes, etc. An excellent material to protect expensive palms is wall insulation. Wrap trunks and bud areas and hold in place with duct tape.

Finally, don't trim your plants back until the last frost has passed. Pruning forces lateral growth and premature pruning will result in further cold injury.

PALMS WILL FREEZE

If you have one of the many palm species not recommended for this area, you need to take precautions to avoid cold injury this winter.

The most susceptible palms for cold injury include: 1) Foxtail; 2) Christmas or Adonida specie; 3) Robeleni; 4) Bottle Palm. These palms need protection

from cold when temps reach 36 degrees.

These palms are commonly sold in our area, but are not recommended for our zone by the University of Florida. These palms should be planted in the zone south of the Tampa Bay area. You will see these palms sold here in local nurseries and home improvement stores, but in general, they should be avoided. Save money and stress later on by using only palms for our area.

Protect susceptible, existing palms on your landscape by covering smaller palms with sheets/blankets, concentrating on the bud area, and adjoining trunk area. Large specimens requiring ladders or lifts generally are well established and will recover from injury, but may be worth the protection expense as replacement of these palm behemoths may cost up to ten times the expense to protect.

ARMADILLOS AND MOLES

Armadillo and moles are wild animals which due to loss of natural territory have become an ever increasing problem in residential lawns.



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It is incorrect that if you have armadillo and/or mole activity in your lawn that this indicates you have a grub problem. We hear this on a regular basis from customers who have heard it from another neighbor, etc. This is untrue.

Armadillos and moles eat much of the same things. Yes, grubs are a part of their menu, but so are crickets, earwigs, grasshoppers, and most all other insects that may live in the soil, including earthworms.

Armadillos and moles spend most of their active time foraging for these critters. This will result in the disruption in your lawn/soil areas. This is a normal, natural animal process. Natural territories are diminished from construction, so these animals are forced into our yards.

Treatment of your lawn to rid these animals of their food source, where grubs are not solely the problem, is unethical as other beneficial soil insects would be killed unnecessarily.

Sole grub activity will result in turf decline and death, and would occur prior to armadillo activity becoming prominent.

Turf areas will "lift up" like un-rooted sod, if grubs are present.

WILDGRASSES & WINTER

As temperatures cool and especially when we have our first frost, areas of wildgrass in your St. Augustine lawn will brown and go dormant until the spring's warm temperatures greens these areas up again. This is a normal process which occurs each winter.

As you are aware, wildgrasses (i.e. crabgrass, carpet grass, Bermuda grass and torpedo grass to name a few) have no available selective treatment when growing in a St. Augustine lawn base in Florida.

The previously used product, ASULOX, is no longer available to us in Florida, and has not been available for about 10 years.

You will find various internet "crabgrass" solutions available. These are either baking soda or cinnamon based products which do not provide any better control for existing crabgrass than home remedies of Arm & Hammer baking

soda detergent does, and are much more costly.

Keeping your St. Augustine lawn healthy is the best solution for minimizing wildgrass infiltration. Eventually, every lawn will have some amount of wildgrass present.

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.

HAPPY
HOLIDAYS TO
ALL AND OUR
BEST WISHES
FOR THE NEW
YEAR!!!