

Your Yard This Summer

Late Spring / early Summer is a stressful time in our yards and landscapes. We go from our hottest and driest months to our hottest and wettest months. As the daytime temperatures hit the 90 degree and warmer mark, we'll want to watch for several things.

Irrigation The Florida Gulf Coast University has a chart which shows the ratio of evaporation and transpiration in relationship to the temperature. Basically, it shows that when the daytime temperature reaches 90° plus, the sun will bake an inch of water out of the soil in 2 or 3 days. This means we need to irrigate 2-3 times per week if it doesn't rain. Conversely, in winter (but it's our dry season!) when the daytime temps are in the 70's, the sun will bake an inch of water out of the soil in 9-12 days. Therefore, our landscapes water requirements in the summer are 3 times higher than in the winter! That's why we have more drought injury in the late spring and summer than in the winter.

We suggest that if your irrigation system has a rain sensor, you set your timer to run once a week or every five days. This will keep your lawn hydrated if it doesn't rain (the rain sensor will prevent watering if it does rain) and will help keep your system operating; with sprinklers, if you don't use it, you'll lose it. You want to try to apply at least 1" of water each cycle. A rotor zone may have to run 45-60 min and a mist zone 20-25 min. It's better to run them longer, rather than more often.

Bedding Plants and Flowers This time of year is a transition time for our seasonal color. Our impatiens and geraniums are either gone or ready to be pulled. Because of our high temperatures and rain fall, we don't have the choices for high impact color mass, but we can add lots of variety to your seasonal gardens.

We classify summer color into three categories:

1. Lots of color and drama, but may not last until November. We may want to replant in early August or early September. These include:

marigolds	verbena	vinca
portulaca	celosia	
red salvia	zinnias	

2. Will grow all summer with good color:

caladiums	crossandra
dustymiller	ruella
purple/blue salvia	assorted "butterfly" plants

3. Considered perennials, but are grown as summer annuals:

heather

pentas

lantana

blue daze

Keep in mind these plants may require more water than your turf areas and may succumb to fungus if there is too much rain. With a little patience, we can maintain a colorful and blooming landscape all year round.

Things to do in your yard

Trimming Now: Now is an excellent time to perform what we call our "spring cut", where you trim heavy and hard. If your hibiscus or ligustrum are looking a little leggy, you can lay into and cut them back to hard wood. This gives them the summer growing season to flush new growth and be the size and shape you want for fall. We jokingly ask our customers to let us know when they are leaving for the summer so we can stand in the driveway and wave good-bye while holding a chainsaw. That's not too far off the truth. Almost everything will benefit from a good hard trim now.

Feeding: It's good to get your spring feeding down now before we get the heavy rains. By feeding now, we can prevent some of the tremendous flush of growth which occurs when rains follow a feeding. While not all that important, it does save the extra work by cutting less grass and may reduce the chance for developing fungus or a sod web worm infestation. Keep in mind our new fertilizer ordinance requires us to have fed before June 1.

Pests: Just about everything will be active soon. Keep a special watch out for chinch bugs developing in the sunny hot spots we couldn't get enough water to earlier. Aphids, scales and mealy bugs will be attracted to all the new soft plant growth. Heavy infestation should be chemically treated, otherwise look for natural predators like ladybugs or predatory wasps. If they're active, you may not have to spray.