



A MESSAGE FROM *Jeff*

Another year is almost behind us and what a year it has been!

COVID-19 has dominated our lives for over 7 months and it appears there is no immediate end to this phenomenon. Although our situation has improved for the better, there are still a lot of lives adversely affected from this virus. I hope with this newsletter we find you and your families well, healthy, and hopefully Covid free. I know at Quality First we have been incredibly fortunate to have had no issues with Covid and hope to keep it that way.

A lot has happened over the last couple of months. One of the major issues that has affected some of our customers is the temporary loss of one of our technicians due to a broken ankle. Kerry Smith tripped in his garage and fell resulting in a very bad break. It required several screws, pins, and a plate to put him back together. Rest assured he is fine and will return hopefully by January. We have had many questions and concerns about Kerry and we much appreciate this as does Kerry. He thanks you all for your concern.

The most significant issue we have dealt with since mid-August is the rain. In many cases, it has been relentless. This wreaked havoc with our landscapes, especially our turf grass, with Zoysia being the number one problem with a disease. Pythium Blight Root Rot has affected our Zoysia again this year and in many cases, it has been worse than ever. This is a challenging disease (please review the article in this addition about Pythium). Some cases recover within weeks to a month. Some can take up to 60 days to recover if not even longer. I know at my home my Zoysia has taken 60 days plus to recover but I also did absolutely nothing extra nutritionally to see how long it would take to grow out. I will be at 90 days before it is completely recovered.

This is our challenge with Zoysia grass. I love my Zoysia but loathe the fact that Zoysia seems to do what it wants and in its own time!

We reviewed rainfall rates for the year. We generally average 50" to 53" inches in our area per year. We are at about 60" to 70" of rain this year and all in about 4 to 5 months. (depending where you live)

We also used this information to propose your irrigation recommendations for the upcoming season. Slowing down the water / irrigation is very important this time of year as the next disease issue will start in November. These are Brown Patch, Large Patch and Zoysia Patch all having the same result, brown spots in the lawn. It is predicted to be a warmer and dryer fall and this can greatly affect the turf in a positive way.

Last but not least we are in a dynamic political time. You may receive this prior to election day, no matter your choice we hope all are able to get out and vote.



ZOYSIA

This can become a challenging time of the year for Zoysia. Our major concern is Brown Patch Fungus. Prevention is the best approach as Zoysia is slower to recover from disease issues. Also cooler temperatures and excess moisture may result in the Zoysia not having good color. An alternative to retain color in Zoysia is lawn paint. This is truly a beneficial application. Color will hold for 30 to 45 days depending on the growth of the turf. This is also a good time of the year for Zoysia as maintenance issues really slow down but it is still important to maintain an every other week cutting for aesthetics. Edging and weed eating become almost unnecessary but you should still edge one time per month, just to keep the edges sharp and crisp.



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.





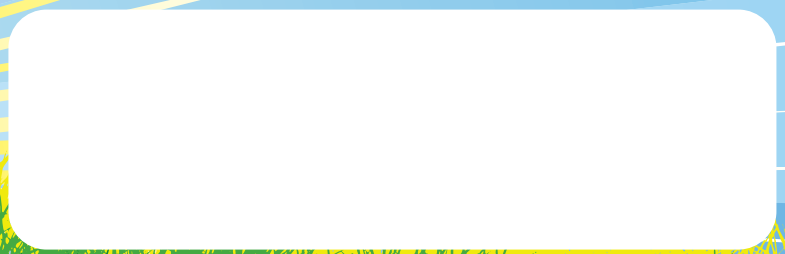
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FREEZE WARNINGS

A few good cold nights through the winter really do more good than harm. We even need a couple of freezes in our temperate zone for the plant material considered best for our climate to thrive.

DO NOT RUN YOUR IRRIGATION IF A FREEZE IS PREDICTED!

You should even make sure the irrigation system is off so it does not do an auto-run.

Some will say it is good to run the irrigation on a night when a freeze is being called for, to warm the soil or insulate the plants. The only place this is actually recommended is in orchards or nurseries. These people sit up all night and monitor the temperature along with everything else that contributes to a freeze. Based on knowledge, experience, and weather reports they will run the irrigation at just the right time to protect the plants and not allowing the water to freeze. However, even these folks can make a bad call as the weather can change quickly. On the other side if the irrigation runs and the water freezes on the turf or plant material there will be extensive damage that far exceeds not running the irrigation at all.

The best thing you can do when it is likely to freeze is to cover sensitive plants (make sure the cover does not contact the plants) and then let Mother Nature run her course. Make sure you take the covers off the plants the next morning or the plants might get baked as temperatures warm back up.

You are always welcome to contact us if you have questions concerning protecting your plants from a freeze.

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

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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