

SOUTHERN LAWN

TIMES

A monthly E-Newsletter for Father and Son Pest and Lawn Solutions

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What we are doing this month and why.

This month we will begin to apply our growing season fertilizer formula which contains nitrogen. Nitrogen encourages growth and green color. This formula also includes phosphorus, potassium and several minor nutrients as well. We are also continuing to apply pre-emergent weed control to suppress winter weeds. We will apply pre-emergent weed control throughout the year to keep constant pressure on weed populations. We are also applying post emergent weed control to control actively growing weeds.

As we move into spring and summer, insect pest activity will increase. The exact timing and severity of the pest activity varies from year to year, but we are starting to keeping an eye out for chinch bugs and sod web worms now. So far we have seen very little insect activity. Hopefully, this will be a mild year for insect pests. We will apply fungicide as needed when we notice disease activity occurring.



WHEN SHOULD YOU DETHATCH YOUR LAWN?

Contrary to popular opinion, thatch is not a result of leaving grass clippings on your lawn. Thatch actually comes from the accumulation of too many runners or "stolens" in the lawn. Most southern turf grasses grow laterally as well as horizontally. This lateral growth periodically needs to be reduced or the lawn will become unhealthy and fall into decline. Just as mowing keeps the grass from getting too high, dethatching keeps the grass from getting too dense. The best time of year to dethatch is in late spring to early summer, after the grass is out dormancy so there is plenty of growing season left for the grass to recover from the dethatching. The best way to go about dethatching is to rent a dethatcher. Motorized, walk behind dethatchers do a much better job than dethatching lawn mower attachments. Going over the lawn with a mower after using a dethatcher will reduce the volume of debris you will need to handle from the dethatching process. Here are some indicators that it is time to dethatch your lawn:
The grass feels spongy and soft when you walk on it. The lawn is so dense it is hard to push a mower through it.
It's hard to feel the soil with your fingertips through the grass.
You water and fertilize frequently.



HOW TO CARE FOR FREEZE DAMAGED SAGO PALMS

This winter we saw temperatures down in the mid 20s which caused freeze damage to many types of plants. Several palm varieties we plant here in northwest Florida, including sago palms, have a low tolerance to cold weather. Sago palms are very hardy and can withstand a lot of stress. I spoke to a customer one time who saw a large sago palm sitting on the curb his neighbor had dug out and was throwing away. My customer tied a rope around the large palm and drug it over a block to his house and then planted it. A year later it produced a new set of fronds and it's been healthy ever since! That being said, if your sago palm have freeze damage from this past winter, it will most likely recover without a problem. You can trim off any damaged fronds and fertilize it. Then just be patient until it produces new growth which should be sometime this year.



IS A DIGITAL OR ANALOG SPRINKLER SYSTEM THE BEST?

Both digital and analog sprinkler systems have their advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of a digital system is having complete flexibility of scheduling individual zones. Since the schedule on a digital system is set electronically, any zone can be set to run at any time on any day.

On the other hand, when an analog system runs, it must run though all the zones and there is no ability to select certain zones to run without the rest of the zones running.

The disadvantages of a digital system are it can be more complicated to operate since you have to program in the watering schedule. They are also susceptible to damage from power surges during lightning storms.

The advantages of an analog system are they are more simple to operate and are not susceptible to damage from power surges caused by lightning storms.

It is possible to convert from one type of system to another.



WATERING INSTRUCTIONS

At the time of this writing, we are forecasted to have high temperatures in the high 70s and low 80s for the next 2 weeks with periodic precipitation. Under these conditions, it is appropriate to start watering 2-3 times a week and increasing the frequency as the temperature gets warmer and/or we have sunny days with low humidity. Absence of cloud cover and low humidity can significantly increase watering requirements for grass even when the temperature doesn't increase. Always apply 30-45 minutes of water per zone when irrigating. Do not reduce the the amount of water applied, only adjust the frequency it's applied. The ideal time of day to water is in the early morning hours, while the dew is still on the ground. This is generally between midnight and 8 AM. The advantage of watering during this time is 1. You are not extending the number of hours during the day the grass is wet there by encouraging disease activity. 2. Less water is lost to evaporation. 3. There is less wind during the night to blow the spray pattern off target.

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