

SOUTHERN LAWN TIMES
A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR FATHER AND SON PEST AND LAWN SOLUTIONS
NOVEMBER 2023

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What we are doing this month and why

This month we will continue to apply our fall/winter fertilizer formula which contains potassium. Potassium encourages root growth which enables the grass to store carbohydrates for next spring when it comes out of dormancy. 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.

Sodwebworm activity is starting to slow down significantly due to the cooler weather. We will continue to apply insecticide with our treatments until sod web worms are completely inactive. Disease has not been a big issue so far this year due to the overall moderate levels of rain and high temperatures. We will apply fungicide as needed when we notice disease activity occurring. Mole crickets remain active and we will treat mole crickets as needed when they are present



SHOULD YOU CUT BACK YOUR CRAPE MYRTLES FOR THE WINTER?

Crepe myrtles are a staple of southern landscaping. Their smooth, bark-less wood, multiple trunks and summer blooms make them a favorite among ornamental landscape plants!

However a sort of odd pruning practice is sometimes employed on these trees in which the main trunks are cut off at around 5 feet and each fall, all the previous year's growth is removed so that there are only nubs left on the ends of each trunk. It is thought that by doing this, the tree will produce more blooms the following growing season although studies seem to indicate otherwise.

A secondary reason for this practice is to keep the tree from outgrowing its dedicated space if it was planted in a confined area, say next to a house. The practice of pruning back crepe myrtles every year has been an area of controversy with some horticulturists claiming it harms the tree and calling the practice "crepe murder". In my experience, I've seen crepe myrtles that have been pruned every year for decades and I've never seen one suffer from it. On the other hand, I don't think it does the tree much good either. Therefore pruning back crepe myrtles in the fall, in my opinion, is strictly a matter of preference based on how you want the tree to look. If there is enough space for the tree to spread out and it is a larger variety of crepe myrtle, you may want to leave it alone but if you prefer the pruned look, you can cut it back.

WHY YOUR LAWN NEEDS LESS WATER THROUGH THE WINTER.

Fall is now here and lawns will soon be going dormant. Does grass still need to be watered even though it's not growing? The water requirements for turf grass along the Emerald Coast change significantly in fall and winter for a number of reasons.

First, there are fewer hours of daylight and the temperatures are cooler, therefore the grass experiences far less "evapotranspiration" (loss of moisture from the plant into the air) than during the summer.

Second, since the grass stops growing, it doesn't need as much water to produce new leaf tissue and finally, during the dormant season, the lawn actually sheds part of its root system, decreasing the grass's ability to absorb the same volume of water it could during the summer.

For these reasons, the grass does not need to be watered by the irrigation system from November through February. Continuing to water the grass through the winter may cause the ground to remain soggy, creating ideal conditions for disease to develop and kill the grass over the winter.

Another good reason to stop watering is so the irrigation pump can be drained to avoid the risk of freeze damage.

By the way, established shrubs and ornamental plants will also be fine through the winter without irrigation.



HERE IS THE EASIEST WAYS TO DEAL WITH LEAVES IN YOUR YARD!

Trees can add beauty and tranquility to a landscape. But they can also add quite a bit of maintenance as well! Some trees shed for long periods of time making the task of leaf pick up almost a full time job!

Here is a way to make leaf collection and disposal more manageable.

Instead of using a rake, invest in a powerful back pack blower. It will set you back a few hundred dollars but the time you save over the long run will be well worth it if you deal with a lot of leaves! Blowers move far more leaves, with far less effort, in a fraction of the time than using hand rakes. If you purchase a blower, spend the extra money to get the most powerful model they have. Spending that little extra money will equate to many hours saved moving leaves. And don't waste your time or money on those hand held leaf vacuums. It takes for ever to suck a yard full of leaves through a 3 inch wide tube into a bag that has to be emptied every 30 seconds.

When you have blown the leaves into piles, the quickest way to bag them is to get a helper. One person stands holding the edge of the bag on the ground with their feet spread apart and holding the other edge up while the other person stuffs the leaves in the bag. If you have a place on your property to just dump them, the quickest, easiest way to move leaves across the yard is to rake the piles onto a large tarp and drag the tarp to where you want to dump the leaves.



Watering Instructions

At the time of this writing, forecasted temperatures are in the high 80s with lows in the mid 60 and sporadic rain. Under these conditions, we are advising watering 3 to 4 times a week. As the temperature cools, grass needs less water because it's not growing and it's losing less moisture into the atmosphere.

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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