



Landscaping Recommendations

January – March

TURF

This is the best time of year for a number of chores. Mow and water as needed; this being the dry season, it's likely watering will be more needed than mowing. Hold off on fertilizing your lawn grass until the weather warms up.

Remove thatch -- grass growing on top of other grass, rather than in the soil. Some mowers have a "de-thatch" setting, or you can use an ordinary rake. It'll be easier to get it now than any other time. And if you don't, it'll just get worse.

It's the best time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to stop (weed) seeds from germinating in your lawn. Be careful not to apply it in flowerbeds that you want to re-seed naturally. And be sure to read the label carefully even before you buy an herbicide. Many of the popular "weed and feed" mixtures contain chemicals that should not be used near streams, bodies of water, areas that drain directly to the aquifer, or where children or animals will be exposed to the chemicals.

SHRUBS AND TREES

Now is the best time of the year to shop for azaleas and camellias. Why? Because you can see them in bloom -- no guessing about what color and type of flowers they'll have. Azaleas and camellias prefer similar growing conditions: shade (they can tolerate some direct morning sun, but not afternoon sun) and rich, well-drained, acidic soil (they don't like soggy soil or over-watering). Although they're susceptible to a few pests and diseases, once established they're generally healthy, long-lived, low-maintenance plants.

January through March is the prime time to prune many trees and shrubs. Prune these summer and fall flowering trees and shrubs about the time they come out of their winter dormancy (any day now). You can tell they're coming out of dormancy when the first signs of new growth -- little green things -- appear on the stems: Abelia, Goldenrain tree, Oleander, Cassia, Hibiscus, Tibouchina, Crape Myrtle, Mimosa and Roses. Evergreens such as Boxwood, Juniper, Podocarpus, Holly, Ligustrum and Wax myrtle can be pruned any time (except that you probably don't want to cut off flower buds).

DO NOT prune azaleas or camellias now, though. In fact, there's almost no need to prune azaleas and camellias at all, except to remove damaged limbs. For azaleas, camellias and these other winter and spring flowering trees and shrubs, wait and prune them during the

first two months after flowering is over: African Tulip Tree, Hydrangea, Spirea, Dogwood, Indian Hawthorn, Star Magnolia, Fringe Tree, Redbud, Wisteria, Gardenia and Saucer Magnolia.

ANNUALS AND SHRUB BEDS

There's still time to transplant a number of cool season annuals, but mainly we're entering the beginning of planting season for warm-season annuals and perennials. In our climate, the cool-season plants will be dead or dying by the end of May, and many of the warm season annuals planted now will be worn out by mid-July, so plan on repeat plantings over the next few months so you can extend the colors of summer.

Even though there's still some risk of frost and freezes, 4" pots of the following can safely be planted now: Alyssum, Baby's Breath, Calendula, Candytuft, China Doll Carnation, Delphinium, Dianthus, Dusty miller, Foxglove, Lobelia, Marguerite daisy, Nasturtium, Pansy, Petunia, Snapdragon, Statice, Stokes aster, Sunflower, Sweetpea and Yarrow.

WATER REQUIREMENTS

You need to irrigate. Watch for indications of drought from your lawn before watering. Irrigate about 3/4" - 1", two to three times per week during the summer. Water during the early morning to avoid diseases. Even with a professionally installed system, it is important to check coverage at least weekly as heads may become clogged, damaged, or off-center and leaks in the line may occur. An easy way to routinely check your irrigation system is to place small, straight-sided cans in a straight line from your sprinkler to the edge of the watering pattern and look for uniformity of coverage. If an area is not receiving water from one or more heads, or if a head is not providing complete coverage, dry spots can develop. This can lead to any of the problems associated with drought-stressed turf. While checking uniformity with the coffee can method, you can also easily determine how long it takes your system to apply 3/4 - 1 inch of water. Turn the water on for 15 minutes and calculate the average depth of water in the cans. Multiply this number by four to determine the irrigation rate inches per hour.

April – June

TURF

Time to restart the endless summer cycle: water, fertilize, water, weed, water, mow, and repeat cycle.

Go easy on the fertilizer and pesticides, especially if you have the sandy soil typical of northern and central Florida. It's more like a sieve than a sponge, and the chemicals make their way pretty quickly into waterways and the underground aquifer.

A pre-emergent herbicide is a chemical that prevents weeds by stopping seeds from germinating; if the weeds are already up, it has no effect. Also, it's non-discriminatory -- it stops good seeds as well as weed seeds. If you apply one of these or a "weed and feed"

product to your lawn, read the label carefully BEFORE you even buy it. Many of these mixtures contain chemicals (atrazine, for example) that should never be used near streams, bodies of water, areas that drain directly to the aquifer, or where children or animals will be exposed to the chemicals.

SHRUBS AND TREES

April through June is the time to fertilize most trees and shrubs, especially the ones that are just finishing flowering. The type of fertilizer you use should depend partly on the type of plant and partly on the condition of the soil it's growing in.

If there are fertilizers formulated for the specific plants that need your help, such as camellias, it's probably wise to use them for its regular diet. At the same time, if your camellia's leaves look yellow this is a condition known as chlorosis. It's caused by a deficiency of iron in the soil and is easily corrected by adding an iron supplement to the soil around the plant. These products are also available in the fertilizer section at garden centers and have the word iron in the product name.

Florida soils tend to be somewhat alkaline and high in phosphates, so you want to be careful not to add too much phosphate. It's best to use a time-release fertilizer and water it into the soil so it gets to work right away and doesn't oxidize.

PRUNING

If any of your trees and shrubs still show freeze damage from last winter, don't wait any longer to remove any cold-damaged or dead wood. There are a couple of ways to tell if a branch is dead. One is to try gently bending it; if it breaks, it's dead, if it bends and snaps back into position, it's probably not. Or scrape the branch with your fingernail; if there's some green underneath the outer layer, it isn't dead.

ANNUALS AND SHRUB BEDS

The afternoon rains tend to shatter blooms of geraniums and can promote leaf spot diseases on many flowers. Use a general-purpose fungicide labeled for flowers when frequent afternoon rains begin.

4" pots to plant in April: Celosia, Coleus, Calliopsis, Crossandra, Dusty Miller, Exacum, Gaillardia, Gazania, Hollyhock, Impatiens, Lobelia, Marguerite Daisy, marigold, Nicotiana, Ornamental Pepper, Pentas, Periwinkle, Phlox, Portulaca, Rudbeckia, Salvia, Streptocarpus, Sweet William, Thunbergia alata, Torenia, Verbena and Zinnia.

In May, plant 4" pots of Celosia, Coleus, Calliopsis, Crossandra, Exacum, Gaillardia, Gazania, Hollyhock, Impatiens, Kalanchoe, Marigold, Nicotiana, Ornamental Pepper, Pentas, Portulaca, Salvia, Torenia, Verbena, Vinca and Zinnia.

June is a hot month, which limits planting of many flowers. For June planting, choose hardy flowers: Celosia, Coleus, Exacum, Hollyhock, Impatiens, Kalanchoe, Marigold, Nicotiana, Ornamental Pepper, Portulaca, Salvia, Torenia, Vinca and Zinnia.

WATER REQUIREMENTS

The amount of water to apply at any one time varies with the amount of water present in the soil, the water-holding capacity of the soil, and soil drainage characteristics. An efficient watering wets only the turf grass root zone, does not saturate the soil, and does not allow water to run off.

Florida soils are typically sandy and hold 1 inch of water in the top 12 inches of soil. If the roots are in the top 12 inches of soil and the soil is dry, then 3/4 to 1 inch of water is required to wet the area thoroughly. This is equivalent to 465 to 620 gallons of water for each 1000 square feet of lawn. Generally, turf grasses require no more than 0.3 inches of water per day. Under extreme summer conditions, water use can be as high as 0.4 inches of water per day. During winter, when grasses are not actively growing, water use may be only 0.05 inches of water per day.

July – September

TURF

If you still want to establish a lawn, you can seed, sod or sprig all types of grass. However, seed of St. Augustine grass is not available and you must sod or sprig. Make sure to water it regularly to promote root development. If you are planning to travel out of town, make arrangements for your lawn to be watered.

This is a good time to fertilize Bahia, Bermuda, St. Augustine and Zoysia with a water-soluble inorganic nitrogen source like ammonium nitrate or ammonium sulfate at a rate of 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. An alternative balanced fertilizer, like 16-4-8, may be applied at the same rate of 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft.

This is also the time of year to watch for insects and diseases that damage lawns. It is much easier to control a problem when it is detected early. Watch for symptoms or changes in your yard that do not appear normal, and then identify the cause.

Chinch bugs may be observed in St. Augustine grass from April through September causing yellow or brown patches. Blades appear brown but not wilted. Only treat when population levels have reached a damage threshold of 25 chinch bugs per square foot. Spot treat affected areas with Diazinon.

If mole crickets are a problem, you can apply a mole cricket bait. Lightly broadcast the bait evenly over the surface late in the afternoon when it is not likely to rain. Do not irrigate after the application.

There are several diseases that can be a problem. Dollar spot is a disease, which looks like 2-3 inch diameter dead spots scattered across the lawn. It can affect Bahia, Centipede, and Bermuda. Apply 1/2 lb. of nitrogen to encourage grass to out grow the problem.

Gray leaf spot is a disease primarily of St. Augustine common in the summer, especially now that our seasonal rains have returned. Prolonged wet foliage and excess available nitrogen tend to increase severity and spread of this disease. Elongated, oval brown spots can occur in the leaves sheaves or stem. Some spots may have a yellow hollow. Disease blades wither and brown giving the lawn a scorched appearance. Mow less frequently and collect clippings if you have gray leaf spot.

Pythium and Take All root rots are common lawn diseases now. Grass weakened by poor drainage, excessive traffic, poor mowing practices or nematodes are susceptible.

SHRUBS AND TREES

Containerized trees and shrubs can be planted now. Prune azaleas only up to mid July because buds will come soon. Cut back poinsettias by one-half to promote increased branching. Trim the spent blossoms off the crape myrtle tree to encourage a second bloom on new growth. Divide and replant ferns and lirioppe that are too crowded.

Fertilize azaleas, camellias and gardenias with "Camellia-Azalea Special" or other acid-forming fertilizer now. Fertilize roses with each new flush of blooms. Plant palms and potted crape myrtle in bloom.

ANNUALS AND SHRUB BEDS

Even though it is the hottest time of the year, there are quite a few flowers that can be planted. In July plant 4" pots of: Blue Daze, Blue Sage, Cannas, Celosias Cleome, Coleus, Crossandra, Dahlberg Daisy, Exacum, Echinacea, Gerbera Daisy, Golden Shrimp Plant, Globr Amaranth, Goldenrod, Impatiens, Justicia, Kalanchoe, Lantana, Lisianthus, Melampodium, Mexican Sunflower, New Guinea Impatiens, Nierembergia, Pentas, Portulaca, Purslane, and Salvia.

Refresh your garden with summer color in August by planting Coleus, Kalanchoe, Marigolds, and Salvia.

In September, plant Alternanthera, Blue Daze, Exacum (Persian Violet), Foxglove, Kalanchoe, and Wax Begonia. All are heat tolerant and will be colorful until first frost, which may be late November.

WATER REQUIREMENTS

Irrigation of many Florida lawns is controlled by a pre-set automatic sprinkler system. While automation is becoming increasingly necessary in many areas of our lives, automatic sprinkler systems and improper watering practices are undoubtedly the single biggest factor leading to decline of home lawns. It is important to remember that we do, on average, receive 60 inches of rainfall or more yearly in most parts of Florida, and that the majority of this rainfall occurs between June and October. When rainfall is adequate to meet the plants transpiration needs, supplemental irrigation systems should be turned off. How do you know what the grass transpiration needs are? University of Florida guidelines call for watering lawns on an "as-needed" basis. This can be determined by observing the grass for signs of drought, which indicate that transpiration needs are not being met. The signs that you need to look for are:

- Leaf blades are folded in half lengthwise in an attempt to conserve water.
- The grass takes on a blue-gray tint rather than maintaining a green color.
- Footprints or tire tracks remain visible on the grass long after being made.

When these signs of drought are seen on a large portion of the lawn, its time to irrigate.

October – December

TURF

It's almost too late to fertilize for the fall. Hurry to do it before mid October. Pre-emergence herbicides can be applied now to control winter annual weeds. BE CAREFUL when you use products that contain Atrazine. If temperatures are above 85 degrees Atrazine herbicide damage may occur on your St. Augustine grass.

In many parts of Florida, it is not possible to have an attractive, green lawn throughout the winter months due to low temperature exposure. Permanent lawn grasses in upstate Florida (Bahia grass, Bermuda grass, Centipede grass, St. Augustine grass and Zoysia grass) go dormant in the late fall and winter. These grasses grow very slowly, lose color in the fall, and then turn completely brown with the first frost. Brown lawns throughout the winter are unattractive and weeds are easily seen, so a practice called "over seeding" is often used to provide a green winter lawn. Over seeding is the practice of using a temporary grass that is seeded into the permanent lawn to provide winter color.

WHICH GRASS TO USE? Several cool season grasses can be used for over seeding, including ryegrass, bluegrass, Bentgrass and tall fescue. Bent grass, bluegrass and fescue are beautiful and because of their fine texture are very compatible with Bermuda grass and Zoysia grass. However, due to their maintenance difficulties and costs, they are not generally recommended for the average homeowner. By far the most common temporary grass is RYEGRASS. Annual, intermediate and improved (perennial) ryegrasses are popular because of rapid seed germination, fast growth, adaptability and reasonably low cost. Ryegrass is widely adapted, does well in either sun or shade and tolerates close,

frequent mowing. If seeded heavily and mowed closely, ryegrass can provide a very dense and beautiful lawn throughout the winter. By the time the ryegrass dies, the permanent lawn grass should be actively growing again, and will provide color and cover the rest of the growing season. Of course, the ryegrass will have to be reseeded each fall to provide a green wintertime lawn.

TIMING? Establishment of winter ryegrass is a fairly simple procedure. Seeding time varies from October to early November in north Florida to mid-November and early December in central Florida. It is best to wait until the daytime temperatures are consistently in the low- to mid-70°F range. If the seeds are planted during warmer periods, water stress and diseases will reduce the chance of seedling survival. In frost-free areas of south Florida, it is usually warm enough so the lawn does not go dormant. In this case, over seeding is probably not needed for winter color.

SHRUBS AND TREES

Plant containerized trees and shrubs anytime. However, wait until winter to transplant deciduous trees.

It is too late in the year to fertilize or prune most landscape plants. We are getting near the cold season and fertilization may result in cold damage.

Watch closely for scale insects on camellias, magnolias, euonymus, gardenia, loquat, and coniferous evergreens. Horticultural oil, Cygon Diazinon, Malathion, Merit, Orthene, or 2% Di-syston G may be used to control the scales.

Check landscape plants for aphids. These are small insects that suck the plant juices from the under side of the leaves. A new aphid has appeared on the scene. The woolly hackberry aphid, which looks like snow on the twigs and leaves, is infesting only hackberry trees. Aphid feeding can also result in black sooty mold. Control with insecticidal soap, Orthene, Malathion, or Diazinon. You can mix your own soap solution by adding 2 tablespoons of dish detergent to 1 gallon of water.

Whiteflies have also been bad this year. Control is the same as with aphids. You may need to apply a series of spraying to eradicate.

In recent years, caterpillar infestations have been serious on a variety of landscape trees and shrubs. They can be controlled using Dipel, Thuricide, or Sevin.

PRUNING.

It is best to prune trees such as oaks, maples, hickory, and other large shade trees during the dormant season or just following a growth flush. Pruning at other times frequently promotes undesirable sprouting. Trees sprout excessively when pruned during active shoot elongation.

ANNUALS AND SHRUB BEDS

In October set out 4" pots of the following seasonal annuals: Snapdragon, Shasta daisy, Foxglove, Pansy, and Petunia plants. In November, also plant Statice, Carnations, Calendula, and Dianthus. All are for December planting.

Fertilize annual flowers during soil preparation and then monthly.

WATER REQUIREMENTS

Water during dry spells, especially azaleas and camellias. When rains stop, water 1-2 times weekly. It is better to water your landscape more thoroughly and less often than to apply frequent shallow waterings. A good rule of thumb is to irrigate ½" of water per irrigation. Adjust your irrigation seasonally as during the winter, your landscape requires much less water due to shorter days and cooler temperatures.