UF/IFAS Columbia County Extension
Commercial Horticulture Newsletter

Columbia Green

May 2012

UF/IFAS
Columbia County Extension
164 SW Mary Ethel Lane
Lake City, FL 32056
(386) 752-5384

Nichelle Demorest
dndemorest@ufl.edu

Inside this issue:

What to Do When Clients Want
Turfgrass in the Shade

Most clients want their lawns to be lush and green, even in the heavily shaded portions of their property. The amount of shade varies over time as trees and large shrubs mature and block more sunlight each year. And if there are deciduous trees, the amount of sunlight can change seasonally. Sunlight may also vary within a yard, with some parts in full sun all day, and other parts shaded all or part of the day.

Grass that does not receive enough sunlight becomes weak and spindly because it is working hard to obtain sunlight. This elongation to capture sunlight depletes the plant's carbohydrates, which can reduce the lawn's overall health and vigor. Stressed grass is quickly affected by other insect and disease problems.

Most of Florida's grasses should receive at least six hours of sunlight each day for optimal turfgrass growth and health. Some of this light may be partially filtered by trees. Research has shown that most St. Augustinegrass cultivars actually grow best if up to 30% of full sunlight is filtered throughout the day. Grass growing in some shade has less heat and drought stress and maintains a darker green color than grass growing in continual full sunlight.

In areas that receive *moderate* amounts of shade, certain species and cultivars of grass persist, while other less shade-tolerant species may not perform well over time.

Choosing the right turfgrass species is important. It is also important to follow specific management practices that can encourage better turfgrass performance in shade. You can read more about these practices on page 3.

Grasses growing under trees are subject to more than just shade stress. These grasses must compete with tree roots for soil space, water, oxygen, and nutrients. Tree roots may extend beyond the canopy line, so harsh effects on the grass can also occur at some distance from the tree. Complete tree removal, trimming back branches, or removing lower branches may be necessary to increase sunlight for good continued grass growth. (UF Publication 'Growing Turfgrass in the Shade' by L.E. Trenholm.)

Turfgrass Species for Use in Shade

No matter how hard you try to grow a healthy lawn in heavy shade, you're soon to fail. The most difficult aspect of this hard fact is convincing the client who wants his shady/sunny lawn to be all uniformly thick and lush. The best alternative is a replacement groundcover (which can be quite attractive) or a good layer of bark mulch.

The best method for growing grass in part shade is to start with a tolerant species and cultivar. **St. Augustinegrass** is a warm season grass species with the best shade tolerance and it also grows well in full sunlight.

The dwarf cultivars 'Seville', 'Delmar', and 'Captiva' are shorter and finer bladed, and have the best shade tolerance. 'Floratam', the cultivar that is most widely produced and used, is actually the St. Augustine cultivar that performs the worst with less sun. The dwarf varieties need at least 5-6 hours of good sun, while 'Floratam' requires a minimum of 6-8 hours.

'Empire', a zoysiagrass culivar, and centipedegrass will also grow well in moderate shade with 6-8 hours of sun. The sun-lovers are Bahiagrass and bermudagrass, so use them in full sun.

Management Practices for Shady Lawns

Turfgrass growing in shady sites is already suffering from the stress of insufficient sunlight. But you can help keep the grass healthy with the following management practices. Your clients should understand in advance that the shaded grass will not match the grass growing in the sunny areas of their yard. This will save you headaches and keep them from being disappointed with the end results of your hard work.

- **Increase mowing height**

Mow at the highest recommended height for the species of grass. This will leave more leaf area so the blades can absorb more sunlight. Higher mowing also encourages deeper, healthier root growth.

- **Reduce fertilizer applications**

Grass grows more slowly in shaded areas and needs less fertilizer. Too much nitrogen can produce a weaker turf system and make it more inviting to insects. Slow-release nitrogen will allow the nutrient to be available in smaller quantities over a long period of time, resulting in slower growth and fewer growth spurts. Look for fertilizer with near equal amounts of nitrogen to potassium. Research indicates that higher potassium levels may help grass thrive in more shaded conditions.

- **Irrigate shaded grass less**

Turf in shady areas needs less water than turf in full sun. Consider removing sprinkler heads from shaded areas and irrigate by hand, and only when needed. If watered on the same schedule as full sun grass, the greater soil moisture and humidity increases the likelihood of disease problems and insect infestations.

- **Avoid heavy traffic**

Grass growing in shady areas is more easily injured by heavy foot traffic and over use. Refer to *Minimizing Traffic Damage to Your Florida Lawn* (http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP071) for more information.

- **Monitor for weeds regularly**

In a shaded environment, the grass usually does not grow densely. Thin areas and bare ground are very vulnerable to weeds that rapidly invade stressed turf. The homeowner should be made aware of weeds that threaten the health of the turf.

In conclusion, growing some species and cultivars of grass in partial shade is possible, especially when correct management practices are used to help minimize stress. Most grasses require 6-8 hours of sun per day, but the above mentioned cultivars may perform well with less. Reducing water, fertilizer and traffic will help.

Florida Lawn Handbook
by L. Trenholm and B. Unruh
This popular guide features sections on selecting and maintaining lawn grasses; identifying and controlling weeds, diseases, and insects and other pests; and pesticide application and uses. Includes quick-reference tables, black-and-white photographs, illustrations and 212 color plates. $19.95 www.ifasbooks.ufl.edu 800-226-1764

Key Pests of Selected Southern Landscape Plants
CD-ROM helps diagnose disease and pest problems of eighteen most popular southern landscape plants. Includes a descriptive presentation with color photographs, and a glossary for easy navigation. Azalea, Crape myrtle, Hibiscus, Holly, Indian hawthorn, Juniper, Ligustrum, Magnolia, Oak, Oleander, Palms, Photinia, Pine, Pittosporum, Sago, Sycamore, Viburnum, Wax Myrtle. www.ifasbooks.ufl.edu

Landscape Maintenance Professionals

The University of Florida's web site gives you access to a calendar of events for educational opportunities to keep yourself and your employees up to date. You also have access to hundreds of research-based horticulture publications from our own Florida specialists. Offer these UF publications to customers and extend the credibility of research to your company.

University of Florida/IFAS **www.solutionsforyourlife.com**

A great selection of resource books on topics such as pest control, North Florida plants and pruning can be ordered directly from the UF/IFAS bookstore. See the selections and order online at **www.ifasbooks.ufl.edu** or call 800-226-1764

Good Decisions During Drought Conditions

Drought-like conditions can occur in sandy Florida soils after only a few days without rain and many lawns require supplemental irrigation during these drought periods. In a perfect world, water would not be a limited resource and we could irrigate our lawns whenever needed. In reality, watering restrictions exist throughout the year because of increasing population, higher water use, but with a limited source of fresh water. This often leads to homeowner frustration, since there is a notion that reduced watering frequency hurts a lawn. To make sure that your lawns can cope with any new restrictions, you may want to talk to your customers about altering maintenance practices.

- Mow High When You Mow
- Sharpen Mower Blades
- Only cut 1/3 of blade tops
- Irrigate Uniformly
- Irrigate in Early Morning
- Apply 1/2 to 3/4 inch water
- Postpone Fertilizer
- Postpone Weed killers
- Only Spot Treat for Pests

Basic Marketing Strategies

Business Performance in the Lawncare Industry

With competition growing daily, it's important to use good marketing skills. Without a basic plan, there's no way to determine whether the business demand you have today will be available to you tomorrow.

Implementing some simple measures such as these basic **five marketing strategies** can make a positive difference in your end-of-year earnings statements.

Strategy 1: Monitor Your Inventory
Strategy 2: Develop a "Preferred Customer" List
Strategy 3: Develop a Newsletter
Strategy 4: Charge the Right Price
Strategy 5: Create a Positive Work Environment

Read the full document online at:
http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fe709

Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance Certification
LCLM

*Workshop offered **June 7th.** Earn CEU's*
Avoid fines! See enclosed information

Green Industries Best Management Practices
For the Protection of Water Resources
June 27th
(see enclosed brochure)

4 CEU's and Certificate of Completion
Limited Fertilizer Applicator License
required by law by the end of next year.

Remind your clients: Lawns may be watered only twice per week during daylight savings time. This includes everyone in SRWMD, whether we have wells or municipal water. We all share alike.

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA/IFAS

Columbia County Extension
164 Mary Ethel Lane
Lake City, FL 32025

Phone: 386-752-5384
dndemorest@ufl.edu
Fax: 386-758-2173

Solutionsforyourlife.com

Let us help you avoid costly fines...

Obtain your LCLM Certification

or

Get 6 CEUs to renew a Certification

UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA
IFAS Extension

What is the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service?

Your UF/IFAS Extension provides research-based educational programs in response to local issues affecting Florida citizens.

Through the combined efforts of state and county UF faculty, staff and volunteers, response can be made to the needs of area residents and businesses. We assist in applying the benefits of research and university expertise to solve problems.

Limited Commercial Landscape Maintenance Workshop

Location: Columbia County Extension Service
164 SW Mary Ethel Lane
Lake City, FL 32056

Thursday, June 7, 2011

This class offers the required CEUs to obtain your LCLM Certification.
Or earn **CEUs** to renew a license. Core, L&O, Structural, LCLM

8:30 – 9:00	**Registration and Pretest**
9:00-9:50	**Pesticides and Environmental Concerns**
9:50-10:00	Break
10:00-10:50	**Pesticide Label and the Law**
10:50-11:40	**Major Insect Groups and Feeding**
11:40-12:15	**Lunch**
12:15-1:05	**Herbicides and IPM**
1:05-1:55	**Common Weed ID**
1:55-2:10	**Break**
2:10-3:00	L**CLM Laws and Regulations**
3:00-3:15	**Application Info, CEU Distribution, Posttest**

$30 Registration includes Appropriate CEUs, Application Assistance, Lunch and Refreshments.

Name_____Phone_____

Company_____email_____

Make checks payable to Columbia County Extension 4-H . Return to Columbia County Extension address above or call 752-5384 to pre-register. (**Pre-registration is required.)**