



“Solutions for Your Life”

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Lawn & Garden | Commercial Horticulture | Families & Consumers | Florida Yards & Neighborhoods | 4-H Youth Development | Urban Sustainability

Things To Do in the Landscape

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Summer brings rampant plant growth and lots to do to maintain the landscape. Check this list to keep your landscape looking good, but also allow some time for lemonade in the shade.

- Plant heat loving **summer annuals** such as angelonia, celosia, marigolds, portulaca, vinca, and narrow-leaf zinnias. Pinch off faded blossoms. Fertilize as directed with any of the slow release mixtures for flowering plants.
- Put down a layer of **organic mulch** two to three inches deep around the plants to help conserve moisture and keep down weeds. Be sure to keep mulch two inches away from the base of all plants.
- **Prune** dead parts from shrubs, trees, and herbaceous plants anytime it appears. Dead wood and stems are the perfect entryway for disease and wood eating insects.
- Consider replacing **shrubs** that require constant pruning to keep them in bounds with more manageable shrubs like dwarf Walter’s viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum* 'Mrs. Schiller's Delight'), India hawthorne (*Raphiolepis indica*), dwarf Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria* 'Schillings Dwarf'), or dwarf Ixora (*Ixora coccinea* 'Nora Grant').
- Wander through your landscape weekly and look for signs of **damaging insects**. Catching infestations early allows for easier control. Watch for **beneficial insects** that are controlling the pests. They may be taking care of the problem for you.
- When treating for **insect pests**, use the least toxic method first, and only treat where the pest is found. It is usually not necessary to treat the whole landscape. Always follow the directions on the label very carefully when using pesticides.
- Mow your lawn at the highest setting for the type of grass and leave the clippings on the lawn (see sidebar).
- **Black spot on roses** can cause defoliation rapidly during hot humid weather. Control by spraying with a suitable fungicide and by removing and destroying all infected leaves including those on the ground. Better yet, plant disease resistant rose varieties.
- The small back **lubber grasshoppers** seen earlier this year are now maturing into the very large adult grasshoppers that are yellow with dark markings and a red area on their wings. Once they reach this size chemical controls are of little value. Consider paying some children to catch them and dispose of them in a bucket of soapy water.

Fruit Trees

Leave **mangoes** on the tree to mature, otherwise, they won't ripen properly. To check for maturity, pick a large one growing in the sun and cut through it lengthwise. The fruit should have flesh around the seed that is turning yellow indicating that it is ready to pick. The other mangoes that are the same size or larger are probably also mature and can be picked to take indoors to ripen.

Avocado varieties ripen at different times of the year. But, the main season is July through February. Avocado fruit does not ripen on the tree. Mature fruit ripens in three to eight days after it is picked. Storing in the refrigerator delays ripening and allows you to keep fruit for a longer period of time.

Applying Pesticides

Avoid applying **pesticides** in the heat of the day. The heat can combine with many pesticides and cause a burn on the treated plants. It is best to apply pesticides in the late afternoon to early evening on an overcast day when no rain is forecast. Avoid breezy days as the chemicals can drift onto other plants and onto the person applying the pesticide. **Always wear proper clothing and read and follow label directions for your plants and your own safety.**

Lawns

With the weeks of rain in late May and early June has encouraged our lawn grass to grow. Mow often enough so that no more than one-third of the leaf blade is removed at each mowing. Cutting the grass high increases the grass leaf surface area for photosynthesis and also encourages a deeper and more extensive root system. Keeping the mower blades sharp and properly balanced is another important part of mowing practices. Grass cut by a sharp blade will heal over more quickly and lose less water than a leaf blade shredded by a dull mower blade.

Grass clippings are a valuable resource that many homeowners throw away. Raking or frequent emptying of mower grass catchers into expensive (non-biodegradable) plastic bags is hard work! But leaving the clippings on the lawn will reduce the amount of time and money you spend on lawn care. Each bag of grass clippings you throw away contains up to one-fourth of a pound of organic nitrogen that could be reused by your lawn.

Chinch bugs are causing St. Augustine lawns to look like straw. Damage usually begins near driveways or sidewalks where heat builds up. Uses a lawn pesticide labeled for chinch bugs and apply it according to label directions. Neem oil is a less toxic alternative shown to be effective against chinch bugs. Research at the University of Florida has shown that chinch bugs lay more eggs on grass over-fertilized with Nitrogen. Use fertilizers with at least 30% slow release nitrogen at the rate of one pound per 1000 square feet of lawn. Fertilizing with iron sulfate during hot summer months can green up the lawn without the producing succulent growth that is so attractive to chinch bugs.

SIDE BAR – Proper grass mowing heights

St Augustine (Floritam) 3 ½ - 4 inches

Dwarf St. Augustine (Seville, Captiva, Delmar) 2 ½ - 3 inches

Bahia 3 – 4 inches

Zoysia 1 – 3 inches

Bermuda ½ - 1 ½ inches

Seashore Paspalum 1 – 2- inches

Centipede 1 ½ - 2 inches

Source: *Mowing Your Florida Lawn* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH028>

For Extension events information / registration
www.pinellascounty.org/events or call (727) 582-2100

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