FOUR PEAKS
Landscape Management, Inc.

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE INFORMATION FOR OUR CUSTOMERS

November

Watering for the Winter Months

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The need for supplemental irrigation in the winter months can be as vitally important to the health of your landscape plants as it is in the summer. Although, winter rains do provide a large margin for error when it comes to irrigation, it is essential to have a plan to keep your landscape healthy. Unless your landscape consists of Bursage, Cactii or other southwest native plant material, this most likely applies to you.

Irrigation is an area of the landscape that is often overlooked during our cool season. While many plants have gone into a dormant stage and aren't readily showing signs of growth, they are busy storing the nutrients and building root systems that will help them spring back to life as temperatures warm. Neglecting them now will have negative results in the Spring when plants are slow to rebound from the Winter. Additionally, stress induced on Pine Trees due to the lack of winter moisture is one of the leading causes of death due to Pine Tree Blight.
Maintaining adequate soil moisture also minimizes the injury suffered from plants and trees during the periods of freezing weather we may see over the next few months. Leaves, stems and branches that are under stress due to dehydration are damaged easier during a freeze when compared to other plants that have adequate moisture stores in their outer extremities.

This is not to say that we should continue to irrigate our plant material at the same rate we did in July. Obviously, we should be watering far less. As a matter of fact, by January, we should only be using about 10% to 15% of the water on our plants and trees compared to what they received during the hot summer months. How frequently you need to water depends greatly on your soil type. A clay type soil will retain moisture better than a sandy, well-drained soil type. Your best bet is to occasionally probe the soil with a screwdriver or the like to see just how much moisture is there. Typically, giving your trees a good soak once a month and your shrubs every one to two weeks should be adequate. Non over seeded turf will benefit from a watering once every 28 days or so once it is dormant after the first frost. Any more than that may only encourage weeds to grow in the lawn. And don't forget, if we get a good rain, you should be able to skip a watering cycle or two.

Structural Defects – Codominate Stems

One of the reasons for damage to trees is structural defects. Poor branch attachments are a major cause of failure in trees. Codominant stems (the tree trunk or larger limbs from which lateral branches grow) are stems that originate around the same position and are about the same diameter. As the tree grows the stems are about the same size without either one becoming dominant. If the angle of the stems are narrow and the attachment point for the stems is a V shape there is a high probability that there is included bark, where there is little or no connection of the stems. This causes problems when the stems diameter increases as the tree matures causing the stems to push against each other causing decay or cracks at the central attachment point. When this occurs winds and or the weight of the canopy may cause failure at the attachment point causing the stems to split and break.

If the tree is young you can structurally cut off one of the codominant stems, the tree will fill out the missing canopy. If the tree is mature and there is no sign of decay or cracks you can do the same thing however the canopy may not fill out. If there are signs of minimal decay or small cracks the stem may be removed however dependent on the size of stem and the age of the tree this may not work if the size of the wound after the stem is removed is large, if that is the case the tree should be removed. If there is major decay or large cracks the tree should be removed.

It is important to catch any structural defects in trees early and make the right pruning cuts before it is too late.

Mesquite with codominant stems that split due to the weight of the canopy. There are signs of decay and it has included bark.

Codominant stem on a Blue Palo Verde. Narrow V shape crotch, decay, and large crack. This tree was removed.

Caring for Winter Rye Lawns

During the month of November your winter rye should be established and is thick, lush and green. In order to keep this look throughout the winter and spring months there are two items that need to be watched. These two items are watering and fertilizing.

Make sure to keep a close eye on watering your winter rye by using a probe of some sort. (soil probe, metal rood or a screw driver) One of the most common problems with yellowing rye grass is overwatering. With the cooler weather you do not need to water your rye grass daily like the summer Bermuda. You should only be watering rye around two to three times a week. Make sure to check the soil moisture to help come up with how long your run times should be.

If rain occurs then you have a great opportunity to turn your water off. The amount of rain is your factor on how long you can leave your water off.

Rye grass needs fertilizer monthly during the winter months to keep it looking good. For best results, use a fertilizer with a nutrient content in a ratio of 3-1-2. This ratio relates to a number found on the fertilizer bag label and indicates the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium found in the fertilizer.

Rye grass is very sensitive to frost damage. This time of year there is often frost on your turf until mid morning. Foot traffic on rye that has frost will damage the blades of grass and it may not grow back.

MONTHLY LANDSCAPE CHECKLIST

Plant Renovation List (Common Type Plants)

- √ Red Bird of Paradise
- √ Desert Willow
- √ Bat-Faced Cuphea
- √ Rose Mallow
- √ Juniper
- √ Indian Hawthorn

- General Irrigation Setting (Actual times will vary depending on the precipitation rate of your system)

- √ Bermuda Grass Turf (if you are not overseeding) irrigated using typical pop-up sprinklers: 6 – 8 minutes one time per week. Bermuda will begin going dormant towards the middle to end of the month depending on weather.
- √ Drip irrigation for Plants: 20 minutes one time per week. These times are for ornamental type plants. Native or xeriscape plants will require less.
- √ Drip irrigation for Trees: 25 minutes one time per week. These times are for ornamental type trees. Native or xeriscape trees will require less.

Please remember that these are general recommendations and depending on your system you may need to adjust watering times up or down. Also, if we do receive rain then irrigation can be suspended until the soil dries.