

Florida-Friendly Landscaping™

Florida-Friendly Roadmap



A Hardy Lawn is a Happy Lawn

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Lawns in southern tropical Florida never get time to rest. In regions where temperatures stay appropriately high and soil temperatures are adequate, grass continues to actively grow. We don't live in tropical Florida; our region 9A experiences cool fall and winter temperatures, which usually includes several days of freezing temperatures. We live in Florida, but in our region we have to expect our lawns to come to a grinding halt. Our lawns take a nap in the winter and proper management practices should be followed to minimize damage and encourage hardiness of our Florida lawns.

Like all plants we want to care for them in sustainable ways. Selection of the right type of lawn should be considered when installing a new lawn. Some lawn types are hardier in cold weather, although all stop actively growing and go dormant during our local winters. Bahia grass is a low maintenance turf that is often used locally, not actively growing during winter months, but recovering with warming spring temperatures.

Plant your lawn in areas where it can collect enough sunlight, prevent erosion and be appropriately managed. Planted in the wrong place, your lawn will provide you with plenty of unnecessary and difficult corrective projects.

Grasses or plants that are not actively growing do not require additional fertilizers containing nitrogen. This application of nitrogen fertilizer will stimulate new

St Augustine varieties, Floratam, Palmetto, among other cultivars, are warm season grasses actively growing at temperatures in the 90's with slow to no growth at low temperatures. Freezing temperatures can damage this grass with expected recovery as temperatures climb in



the spring. Zoysia grass goes into dormancy early in the season and recovers late in the spring due to its slow rate of growth. It is the grass with the longest dormancy period, but provides a thick thatch layer preventing heavy weed infestations during its period of dormancy. Your choice!

growth even at low temperatures and produce tender growth easily damaged by winter freezes. At low temperatures iron applications are often used to produce a greener lawn. Be careful, as iron also can stain driveways, sidewalks and structures. With all fertilization applications, clean up afterwards to prevent water impairment or damage caused by these products. Always read and follow the label. Remember: "The label is the law."

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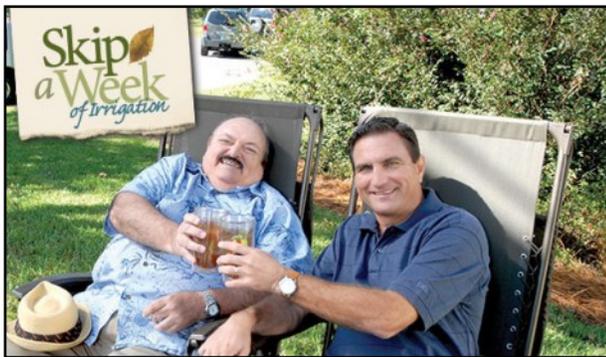


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Often potassium (K) applications occur in the cooler season. Lots of stuff still happens in the warm soil conditions in our region. Potassium is the vitamin for plant health. It is used in the cell wall and to improve winter hardiness of Florida lawns. Potassium, like nitrogen moves quickly through our sandy soils, but does not have the harmful pollutant effects demonstrated with nitrogen.

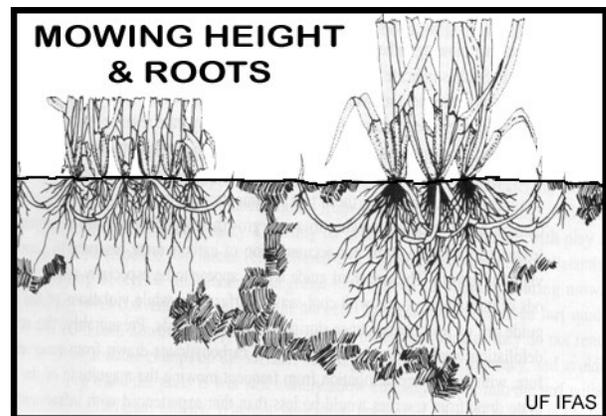
Reduce the application of supplemental water. Plants that are not actively growing do not require the supplemental water applied during the hot summer months. Lower temperatures reduce the evaporation and transpiration of this valuable resource. Irrigation is supplemental to the natural rainfall we experience in our region. Irrigation is water we should use to sustain our landscapes between natural rainfall events. Too much water during cooler seasons can encourage insect infestation and damaging fungus outbreaks.

Skip a week or manually provide supplemental water during the winter months. When freezes are



predicted turn your irrigation off. It is not a good practice to water your lawn prior to or during a freeze event. Often in Florida we see agricultural irrigation during these events.

Using irrigation to sustain your lawn or to protect a strawberry crop are distinctly different practices. Severe damage can be caused by not following this rule. Don't water during freeze events.



Mow your lawn at the highest setting. The taller your turf canopy the more protection it provides your lawn. The taller the lawn the deeper the roots. Always protect the foundation of your lawn. This canopy will protect the stolons, (above ground runners) and surface roots. Don't mow prior to predicted freezes.

Tree canopy provides protection from frost landing on our lawns. Locate your lawns in areas that provide 6 hours of sunlight and near an existing tree canopy or install trees to provide this protection. Too much shade can also reduce the sustainability of your lawn.

Use and apply the correct practices prior to freezing temperatures, and recovery during the spring and summer will be more productive. Protecting the lawns foundation prior to and during a freezing event will ease the recovery as temperatures warm in our Florida landscape.