

POLK COUNTY URBAN HORTICULTURER NEWSLETTER

September 2004

Vol. IV, No. 9

Dear Reader: I hope all of you came through Hurricane Charley and Frances with minor problems, although I know at least a few readers have sustained considerable damage. Due to complications from the recent storms, I have decided to delay the start of Master Gardener Training until at least September 28th.

We still have an adequate supply of melaleuca mulch which the Master Gardeners are selling for \$2.50 per 2 cubic foot bag. It is the most tolerant of the wood mulches to termite attack. We would like to have it all sold by September 11th with the pick up scheduled for September 18th. Anyone ordering more than twenty bags can pick it up anytime. Remember, much of the cypress mulch on the market today comes from cutting down and chipping up our native cypress trees.

I have finally set up a list serve on my computer so I will now be sending this newsletter, on request, by e-mail. Several readers have already indicated that they would like to be put on this list. We still will be sending the newsletter by regular mail for the time being, but due to budget reductions,

we may eventually have to charge a postage fee. Please let me know, if you would like to be placed on the e-mail list.

I want to apologize to you for having to cancel the two Saturday morning programs (lawn care and termites) I had scheduled for August. Due to Hurricane Charley, all of our meeting rooms were being used by FEMA and other Polk County Emergency Management staff. In addition, all of the rescued animals in Polk County were, and are, being housed in our cattle barn.

DEALING WITH HURRICANE RELATED PROBLEMS



Care of Hurricane Damaged Landscape Plants – Hurricane damaged plants should be cared for as soon as possible after the storm. Small trees and shrubs, particularly those uprooted or damaged, should be securely

staked in their original growing positions. Until the tree or shrub is reset, make every effort to protect the exposed root system and prevent it from drying out. Cover exposed roots with soil, moist burlap sacks, or moist sphagnum moss. Remove damaged roots so the tree can be reset at ground level.

Once reset, trees should be held in position with stakes or guy wires. Trees with trunk diameters less than 2 inches can usually be anchored by two or three 48-inch, 2-by-2 inch wooden stakes. Place the stakes about a foot outside the root ball and insert them 18 inches into the soil. Secure the trunk to the stake with ties made from wide, smooth material or hose-covered twine.

Trees 2 inches or larger in diameter should be guyed with three or four cables. Secure guys to deeply driven short stakes evenly spaced outside the root ball. Run guys through rubber hose and secure them to the trunk at only one level. Mark the support guys with bright materials to prevent accidents. Adjust guys several times during the growing season so that girdling and injury to the trunks are minimized. Remove all support stakes and guys after one year.

After the tree is staked back into position, fill in around the root area with soil. Firm the soil around roots to eliminate air pockets and provide support. An excess of soil over the normal root area can be damaging, thus, only replace soil that has been washed or worked away from the roots.

Many trees and shrubs remain upright following a hurricane; however they may have been tossed back and forth creating a hollowing of the soil around the major support roots. These trees or shrubs will also need soil and water added to the root area to eliminate air pockets.

Trees that have been reset in the ground should be watered twice a week and fertilizer should not be applied. Until they become re-established, fertilizer will be of no major benefit and may cause possible injury to new tender feeder roots.



Broken branches should be sawed or pruned from trees and shrubs. Always make clean, even cuts and remove only those that are damaged. Where possible, cut branches back to major limbs or the main trunk, cutting just outside of the branch collar.

Large branches that are too heavy to hold while cutting require three separate cuts to prevent bark stripping. Make the first cut on the lower side of the branch about 15 inches away from the trunk and one third of the way through the branch. Make the second cut downward from top of the branch about 17 to 18 inches from the main trunk to cause the limb to split clearly between the two cuts without tearing bark on the trunk. The remaining stub is easily supported with one hand while you cut it from the tree.

The old standard recommendation was to paint wounds with a quality tree wound dressing to protect the cut surface from wood-rotting organisms and cracking upon drying. Research has shown, however, the wound dressings do not prevent decay. This practice is justified only in situations where aesthetics are important.

Where bark injury has occurred, cut away ragged edges to make a clean, smooth wound.

It is not necessary to paint the wound with a wound dressing.

In cases where all branches have been destroyed, it may be wise to remove the entire tree especially trees such as pine, which do not normally regain their natural form. With other trees such as oaks, where strong bottom limbs still exist, it may be wise to keep the tree. However, emerging sprouts from the ends of large, cut limbs will be poorly secured to the tree and are likely to fall from the tree during a storm. In addition, decay organisms usually enter these large wounds. Damaged trees already declining due to insects or disease should be removed. Trees that have been defoliated by high winds should be saved, as most will resume growth.

Lawn grasses should be freed of fallen leaves, silt, mud and debris, which will cause a smothering of the grass. Grasses and plants that have been under water should resume their growth once the water is drained away. Standing water may have injured some moisture-sensitive shrubs like pittosporum, although the symptoms of injury may not appear until the next summer.

Plants that have been damaged by hurricanes will need careful attention through fall and spring. During periods of drought, damaged plants need mulching and extra watering.



Flood Damage to Landscape Plants

by Anne Yasalonis, FYN Coordinator

After Hurricane Charley many people were left with large areas of standing water on their

property. These areas are not only breeding ground for insects, they also cause harm to any landscape plants that may be in the flooded area. If your landscape is frequently flooded in the summer months you may want to consider making some grading changes to your yard by adding swales, berms or ditches. French drains, tile systems and catchment basins such as rain barrels or cisterns can also be helpful in eliminating standing water.

But will your plants survive the flooding? Some plants have a higher tolerance to flooding than others. The Bald Cypress can handle being under water indefinitely while the Laurel Oak is extremely sensitive. Large amounts of water can have different effects on different plants. Flood damage can affect trees for 2-3 years beyond the initial flood and should be inspected by a certified arborist to determine what action to take in caring for your flood damaged trees. They are now susceptible to fungus, disease and insect problems and must be monitored closely.

Erosion can also cause problems to landscape plants by affecting the root system. If soil has washed away from the root zone, more should be added both under and over the exposed roots. The plant should not be pruned until it shows signs of recovery, but a slow-release fertilizer can be applied. Any sand or soil on the leaf and stem surfaces should be removed as it can damage the plant.

Flood damage in the lawn depends on the type of turf (Bermuda and St. Augustine have a better tolerance than Bahia), the water depth, the temperature of the water and the health of the turf prior to the flooding. Most types of turf can survive for about 4 to 6 days submerged in water; areas submerged longer will not survive and will need to be replaced. If your turf has survived a flood, aerate and lightly fertilize after the water has receded.

MISC. SEPTEMBER GARDENING

Vegetables to Plant – Snap beans, lima beans, pole beans, corn, cucumber, eggplant, pepper, southern pea, rhubarb, summer squash and tomatoes.

Herbs to Plant – Anise, basil, bay laurel, borage, chives, coriander, dill, lemon balm, lavender, Mexican tarragon, mint, parsley, rosemary, sage, sweet fennel, sweet marjoram and thyme.

Flowers to Plant – Ageratum, angelonia, begonia, blue daze, butterfly weed, cat's whiskers, celosia, cleome, coleus, coreopsis, cosmos, garden mums, gaura, gazania, gerbera, goldenrod, gomphrena, heliotrope, impatiens, jacobinia, lantana, marigold, melampodium, nicotiana, pentas, periwinkle, ruellia, salvia, sunflower, sweet alyssum, torenia, verbena and zinnia.

Turf – Continue to watch for insect problems on St. Augustinegrass such as chinch bugs and sod web worms (adults are small brown moths which readily fly when disturbed). Both of these pests are still present and may need treatment. In addition to insect problems, fungus diseases also pose a problem for St. Augustinegrass. Remember, drought, insect damage and fungus damage look much the same. Refer back to my May Newsletter for ways to diagnose lawn problems.

Insects on St. Augustinegrass can be well controlled with bifenthrin insecticide. I recently noticed that Walmart has this product under the trade name "Ortho Max". Fungus diseases, with the possible exception of Take-all root rot, can be controlled with Immunox, Bayer Advanced Lawn Fungus Control or Ortho Lawn Fungus Control granules. One or more of these fungicides can be found at Walmart, Home Depot or Lowes.



Bromeliads – I receive many questions from gardeners about what they can plant in shady areas under oak trees. One of my favorites is the bromeliad. They are colorful and make great ground covers. They can be planted in the soil around the base of an oak tree or they actually can be tied into the fork of two large branches of a tree with monofilament line. Bromeliads tolerate drought and have very few pests. They are sensitive to freezing temperatures, however they get a lot of protection from tree canopies during frosts and freezes.

Roses – After a long summer, roses are usually taller with smaller flowers which have fewer petals. September is a good time to remove dead and declining shoots, along with smaller shoots which will not produce an acceptable flower. They may also be cut back to an acceptable level.

Poinsettia – Flower buds will be initiated the first week of October. Any pruning after September 11th may affect flowering.

Have a good gardening day,

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For Polk County Gardening Information and Horticultural Links:
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