

## November Lawn Care

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As the cooler temperatures of November come our way and the days become shorter, plants will use less water. It is important to avoid over-watering during the cooler months of the year. Lawn grasses want to go dormant during these cooler months so they are not growing very fast and therefore they are not using much water.

Watering correctly starts with checking herbaceous (not woody) plants for wilt. Grass in particular will fold its leaf blades in half, will change color to a bluish-gray and footprints will occur when it needs to be watered. The University of Florida recommends applying  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch of water each time you water grass. This amount of water will reach about 9 inches deep in the soil profile. The water-holding capacity of the soil and how well it drains can vary, so it's important to watch and feel the soil at first. The most efficient way to water is to wet only the rootzone area, not saturate the soil, and not allow any water to run off the property.

I have seen people watering their lawns after the area has just received over an inch of water. I can see the water sheeting off their property, right into the street drainage system. This is totally a waste of water and it is also harming the plants by starving their roots of oxygen by saturating the soil with water. Most of the problems with plants are caused by incorrect maintenance practices. That is assuming that the right plant was chosen in the first place.

Brown Patch is another serious disease of St. Augustine that is normally observed from November-May. The best way to avoid this disease is again through proper maintenance. Avoid using excess nitrogen, especially soluble liquids or quick-release products. Instead, be sure to use slow-release nitrogen sources. Check the label on the fertilizer bag for the percentage of slow-release. Look for 30% or higher amounts of slow release nitrogen.

It's also time to check for white grubs, armyworms, sod webworms and mole crickets. If the turf turns yellow in spots or responds poorly to watering and fertilizer, then check for white grubs. To do this, cut three sides of a 1-foot square piece of sod about 2 inches deep at the edge of a yellow area. Pull the sod back and look for white C-shaped grubs. If 2-3 grubs are found per square foot, apply an approved insecticide.

To check for armyworms, sod webworms and mole crickets, mix 1-2 ounces of dishwashing soap in a 2-gallon sprinkling can full of water. Drench a 2-square foot area with this mixture. If insects are present, they will surface after several minutes. Again, excess nitrogen makes lawns more attractive to these insects, so proper fertilization is important for pest resistance. Use a *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) product such as Thuricide or Dipel to treat armyworms and sod webworms.

For more in-depth information on any of these topics call the Manatee County Extension Office, M-F from 9AM to 4 PM and ask to speak to a Master Gardener. We can mail you our FREE brochures. Or check out the University of Florida Publication Website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>