

# From The Roots Up

The Shrub & Tree Newsletter Of Prestige Shrub & Tree, Ltd

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This is your fifth scheduled visit for the year and your last insect, disease and mite control application until next spring. You will be seeing us out on the property one more time this year for your fall fertilization.

So far, our summer has been both hot and dry in July but August has come in like a lamb. Most of our temperatures so far this month have been below average in the low 80s to average in the high 80s. I would not complain if we spend the rest of the summer in this weather cycle, but I have lived here too long to be duped by this “false fall” and know we will pay for the nice weather at some point. Rainfall for the most part has been decent providing us average rainfall in June but a bit drier in July. August has started with the typical afternoon showers available most everyday. Pay close attention as we move into fall so you can adjust your irrigation accordingly. When we are getting a lot of scattered downpours, folks tend to forget to monitor the plant's water needs. Since many folks still don't water correctly, this problem needs to be addressed sooner versus later to reduce permanent damage. Keep in mind, afternoon downpours may look heavy and wet the ground but not all of this moisture hits the ground or makes it down to the roots.

Consistent watering is the key to survival. The best way to reduce the stress and help the plants survive the heat is to water your trees, shrubs and turf one time per week

to get 1” of irrigation. Irrigation systems vary but usually it takes 45 - 60 minutes per zone to get the 1” equivalency. Use a rain gauge to monitor the rainfall and adjust your irrigation amount accordingly. DO NOT water every other day for 20 minutes as you will lose 50 - 100% of this water to evaporation!

## Summer/Fall Pests

With summer coming to a close, white flies will be hanging on and scale populations will continue to build. Although we treat for all these pests routinely along with leaf spot disease, this last spray application targets these hard to manage pests to reduce overwintering populations of insects and reduce disease activity at the onset of fall.

The Fall Webworm can be problematic every year. We haven't seen much Fall Webworm just yet, but as autumn progresses, you will see more and more. It is very obvious in host trees such as Sourwood and Locust tree. Unlike other caterpillars, the webs will remain in the trees for quite some time after treatment but these caterpillars **do not inflict much damage and cause no lasting damage to the tree.**

As always, we'll be checking all of your landscape plants for problems and addressing them as needed.

## Fall Shrub Pruning

When our weather starts to switch to fall temperatures dropping from highs in the 80s to reaching only the mid to high 60s. Many

plants will begin to put on new growth. This new growth can become quite long and unsightly but you should not succumb to the urge to **heavily** prune. The following are some helpful tips to avoid ruining next season's flower display.

- In the fall, do not prune heavily or deeply. Actively look for small blooms that may have already set. We have already seen camellias, azaleas and other spring blooming plants with small immature buds growing on the stems. One rule of thumb (with some exceptions) to observe is to prune plants after blooming for plants that bloom before MAY. Those plants blooming after MAY can be pruned prior to spring growth.
- Prune only the **long shoots** and do not move into the body of the plant. **If you deeply prune plants such as azaleas, camellias, sasanquas, and other spring bloomers in the fall you will remove next year's flower buds** and you will not be able to enjoy the beautiful spring displays!
- **If your azaleas or other spring blooming plants have not bloomed over the years, determine when they are being pruned!** Most of the time it is due to ill timed pruning not lack of nutrients.
- On most hydrangeas, only remove the old blossoms. Do not prune the shoots as this is where your flowers appear next year

(like azaleas). The exceptions are the arborescens and paniculata types which actually bloom on their new growth. This means, on these two types, you can do some light pruning in the fall to clean up the plants and then, if needed, prune in March as they begin to grow.

- When you prune heavily in the fall, the resulting regrowth may not have time to mature before the first freeze and freezing temperatures can damage the tender tissue. This can result in tip die back and in some cases, bark damage. Do not prune after late September.
- **Here is a link to UGA's more extensive guide to pruning: <http://extension.uga.edu/publications.html>. For pruning, look up bulletin B961 and B949.**

## Yellow Leaves And Leaf Drop

If our weather dries out as it did the previous few years heading though the late summer into fall, we will begin to see quite a lot of yellow leaves on cherries as we progress through the summer heat. Soon to follow will be poplars, birches, dogwoods, sycamores, sweetgums and even pines. This leaf drop is normal and is the tree's response to a lack of sufficient water whether it be from lack of rainfall or inadequate or incorrect irrigation, restricted root systems or simply the summer heat. **We see this every year** and in some cases it is quite spectacular when a cherry, for instance, loses all of its leaves during the late summer. This should remind you to check for adequate soil moisture.

As we move towards fall, the changes in light we encounter also affect leaf drop. This leaf drop occurs long before the first frost

and may cause alarm if you are not prepared.

Another phenomenon we see in late summer is scorch. This occurs on leaves when temperatures are very high and the plants are not getting adequate water.

## Fall Shrub and Tree Planting

Fall is a great time to plant trees and shrubs. The cool fall weather allows them to become established without the stress of the summer heat.

The caveat here is you still need to adequately water the newly planted plants. Many fall planted shrubs and trees fail the following spring simply because they were not properly watered when planted and then not properly watered over winter and spring.

After digging the proper size planting hole, fill the hole with water to be sure that it drains properly. If it holds water and does not drain this will lead to guaranteed problems down the road. If the hole does not drain, then you may need to double the depth of the hole and replace the soil to allow the root system to stay above the poorly drained soil. Once you have the shrub or tree installed, water it in well then water weekly to keep the soil moist, not wet. Small shrubs need about 5 gallons of water per week. Trees need 5 gallons of water per week per inch of tree trunk diameter.

Continue to monitor the watering needs throughout the winter and do not allow the plant to dry out. Your watering regimen needs to continue. Do not neglect any of your plants but especially remember the new ones. There is a perception that once a plant is established it needs less water. This is simply wrong. Once established and the plants increase in size and

root system they actually need more water! Following simple watering guidelines will ensure you have healthy plants for years to come.

Let us speak now of better plants! With all plants you are considering for the landscape do your due diligence and research them on the internet but use university sites. The best source for our area is UGA. What grows in other areas of the world is not necessarily going to be able to handle our soil, temperature ranges and humidity. There is a lot of misinformation out there! Plant the plants correctly and water correctly and you should have few problems. All of us do have favorites in our gardens and here are a few of ours. Encore azaleas have been proving themselves over the past years as being reliable. There are numerous colors and they seem to do well in our landscapes.

Japanese maples: As fragile as these trees appear they are very hardy in our area. There are myriads of varieties to choose from and one of our favorites is the Acer japonicum 'Aconitifolium' maiku jaku. These are hard to find but have unbelievable fall color. The name translates to "Dancing Peacock". Of course, I do not know if I have even seen an ugly Japanese maple, so any choice is a good one. Cryptomerias: These are great replacements for Leyland Cypress for screening plants. Proper spacing must still be used. Deodora Cedar: If you like the look of the beautiful Colorado Blue Spruce which does not survive here, think about planting Deodora Cedar. This was once planted in many landscapes but has fallen into disuse. These do get big and are well suited for large open areas or planted singly as specimen trees.