



GREENSCAPES



The abundance of rain we received this summer is a two-edged sword. On the one hand it was needed to replenish our lakes and aquifers, but on the other, it saturated the roots of the landscaping and turf in many communities.

Everything looks so nice and green during the summer rains (even the weeds,) but that same precipitation sets up the turf and landscaping to fail as soon as the rains subside. Why is that?

The roots of sod and plants will only grow downward as far as they need to, to reach water. With the amount of rain we have received in the past three months, the ground has been over-saturated, causing the roots to only travel an inch or so downward. This is adequate as long as the water is there. However, once the rains stop coming on a regular basis, the roots will have to travel deeper to find its source of liquid nourishment. As the roots grow downward and struggle to find water, the leaf of the grass or plant will begin to show signs of stress (slight browning, wilting, etc.). It is at this point that the real damage to the landscaping can be done.

The common knee-jerk reaction to this stress is to add more irrigation to supplement the lack of rain. However, this is not necessarily the best action at this time. The deeper the root system (4"-6") the healthier and heartier the landscape will be. Since some stress is inevitable when roots are growing downward, discouraging the stress completely by over watering will also discourage the health of the shrub or turf. There is a big difference between stressed plants and dying plants, stressed sod and dying sod. It is the duty of your hired landscape and irrigation maintenance team to properly monitor the community's landscape during this critical period and to assure its homeowners through communication that they are using best management practices and have the community's interests at heart.

It is not unusual for Greenscapes to see a significant increase in service requests during the months of October through May. Many of these will be to report dry spots or leaf wilting. We do not discourage the reporting of these things (some will have other reasons that need to be addressed immediately,) but ask for your patience if, after we check these areas, we determine the turf or plant is not in imminent danger and the process of growing the roots deeper is working. Our goal is to make your landscape as healthy as possible so it can survive all of the extremes of the Southwest Florida weather.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to submit a maintenance request, and we would be happy to assist.