

Helpful Tips

Proper Mowing Practices and Managing Weeds

Mowing Practices

Proper mowing practices are essential for good quality and drought-tolerant turf. Every time a lawn is mowed, the metabolic activities of the grass are stressed, which reduces root growth. Mowing frequency and cutting height need to be carefully considered for a healthy lawn. Using the highest cutting height on the mower will facilitate turfgrass drought-conditioning. This will increase the grass leaf area, allowing for more photosynthesis. This results in more carbohydrates, which are then available for use in recovery from stresses such as drought. The higher the mowing height, the deeper and more extensive the root system will be. Although transpiration (water loss through leaves) will be slightly greater with higher mown turf, the expanded root system proves more advantageous.

Mowing should be done often enough to minimize the shock of cutting. Never mow off more than one-third the height of the leaf blade at any one time. Adjust the frequency of mowing to the growth of the turf. In the summer, it may be necessary to mow more than once a week, but in the winter, once a month or less may be enough. Keeping the mower blades sharp and properly balanced is also important. A leaf cut by a sharp blade will heal over more quickly and lose less water than a leaf blade shredded by a dull mower blade.

Changing the direction of which you mow is also a beneficial practice. When grass is mown in the same direction for an extended period, the weight of the mower begins to cause ruts where the wheels travel. As a result you will begin to scalp the lawn or cut at a lower height than desired.

PROPER MOWING HEIGHTS

Floritam St. Augustine (full sun) - 3 1/2 to 4 inches
Persley Seville St. Augustine (shade) - 2 1/2 to 3 inches
Zoysia - 1 1/2 to 2 inches

Mowing too short is the #1 cause of turf decline to Florida Lawns according to the University of Florida.

Weeds

Weeds can simply be defined as unwanted plants and as homeowners we face many challenges controlling weeds. The first and best method of weed control begins with proper maintenance practices which will encourage a dense, vigorous turf. Healthy turf shades the soil so sunlight can't reach weed seeds ready to germinate. A thick turf also minimizes the physical space available for weeds to become established.

Bare areas in your lawn should be plugged or resodded to help prevent weed infestation as weed control cannot be accomplished in these areas.

Proper cultural practices also have a tremendous impact on your weed control goals. Here are some examples of conditions which will encourage weed growth.

- **Overwatering**- Many weeds thrive on excessive moisture such as Dollar Weed, Sedge and Crabgrass. Weeds cannot be controlled in areas which are being overwatered or which retain a lot of moisture.
- **Underwatering**- Certain weeds such as Florida Pursley and Spurge will thrive under dry conditions.
- **Mowing Too Short**- Mowing too short will decrease the density of the turf therefore allowing weeds to flourish.



Servicing All of Central Florida
866-815-DUCK | DRAKEPEST.COM

Certain weed or grass varieties cannot be controlled chemically. Bermuda, Alexander and Torpedo Grass are some examples of undesirable grasses which infest and take over St. Augustine lawns. There are no products available which will provide pre or post emergent control. Re-sodding is the only way to correct this situation and nothing will prevent these grasses from possibly re-infesting in the future.

Crabgrass:

Unfortunately there is no longer a post emergent weed control available for crabgrass. This is another situation where the areas of infestation would have to be re-sodded. Drake, however is taking an extra step in the early spring months by applying a pre-emergent weed control which will help to reduce but not eliminate the generation of crabgrass.



Servicing all of Central Florida
1-866-815-DUCK
www.drakepest.com