

Ten Common Lawn Problems of Central Florida

Are you confused by your lawn not looking as beautiful as you would like it to be? Well! One of the following could be the problem:

Inadequate site preparation- Soil preparation is the most important step in establishing a healthy lawn. It involves taking a soil sample, cultivation or tillage (4-6 inches for new lawn), remove all debris (rocks, stumps, etc.), addition of top soil and if needed add lime (according to soil test results). Sites that are not properly prepared will have root problems and subsequently weak undesirable turf.

Chinch Bug- Are piercing sucking insects that feed on grass root and foliage. Lawns that are infested with chinch bugs display a yellowish brown discoloration. To diagnose chinch bug; remove the top and bottom of a cat food can or any other cylindrical container, partially put the container in the ground where insects are suspected and then flood with diluted dishwashing detergent. If chinch bugs are present they will float to the top. The lawn can be treated with insecticides labeled for chinch bug.

Nematodes- Are very fine, destructive microscopic wire worms that live in the soil and feed on plant roots. The presence of nematodes can only be diagnosed by sending a soil and root specimen to the nematode laboratory.

Improper Mowing - Scientific research has proven that each turfgrass grows best at when kept at certain height. For example, St. Augustine is at its best between 3-4 inches high. Avoid scalping the grass and always keep your mower in good condition. In particular, dull mowing blades tear the grass blades giving the lawn a ragged appearance. Follow the one-third rule: remove no more than 1/3 of the leaf blade at any one mowing

Irrigation Problems- Over irrigation tends to be a bigger problem than under irrigated lawn. Irrigating ½ to ¾ inch twice per week is ideal for the lawn. Avoid watering late evening; this will cause fungus to grow. Irrigate early in the morning.

Brown Patch Disease- Is a disease that affects warm season grasses; this mostly happens from November through May when the temperature is below 80 degrees Fahrenheit. The disease causes a brown soft rot at the base of the leaf and is more prevalent during a long rainfall season and over irrigation.

Weed Infestation- The answer to a weed problem is applying pre-emergence herbicide twice per year and to control weeds in the early stage of development.

Soil Fertility- Doing a soil sample testing will tell you what nutrients are lacking in the soil. A soil test also gives recommendation on what fertilizer to use and how much to use. Applying fertilizer without a soil test is a guessing game and is unhealthy for the environment.

Soil pH- Soil pH is simply how acidic or alkaline the soil is. To determine soil pH, a soil sample can be sent to UF/IFAS soil lab. Most grasses prefer a neutral pH of about 6.5, if the pH is not at the right level, the grass will not grow to the best of its potential. Not all plants require the same soil pH.

Extreme Temperature- Grasses do not grow well during months of high temperatures and low rainfall, unless there is a good irrigation program in place. In addition, the growth of warm season grasses reduces during winter months. Reduce mowing frequency during high summer months when grass is under stress.

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