

Commercial Clippings

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FOR THE NORTHEAST FLORIDA GREEN INDUSTRY
Including Clay, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns Counties

TIP OF THE MONTH

Preventing Fire in the Landscape

by Raymond Zerba

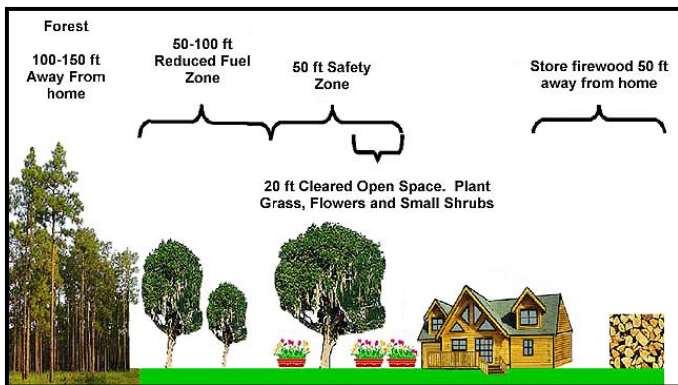
At the time of this writing, we just went through a month when it seemed like Northeast Florida was trying to burn up. No telling what this next month will bring, but I thought it timely to share information that came out of the University of Florida about the things we should do to protect a home from wildfires that enter from surrounding property. You are in a position to influence the clients you work with about topics such as this and in so doing, reinforce your positive image of a caring, knowledgeable, green industry professional. Toward that end – consider advising your clients (especially those with property adjoining wooded areas) of this suggested action plan:

- ▶ Maintain what's known as an adequate “defensible space” around the home. Remove all dead vegetation; rake the ground of needles (especially near the home, under decks, off roofs) and clean rain gutters.
- ▶ Use patios, walkways, driveways, and stone walls as “firebreaks” and if practical, consider using gravel in the space between the house and the first group of foundation plants. Where practical, also move foundation plantings well out from the house. Ideally one should try to

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create an open space of 20 feet around the house, free of all trees and large shrubs. Replace them with perennials, low growing shrubs, or lawn grass.

- ▶ Thin existing trees to create at least 15 feet of open space between their crowns and trim lower branches up to at least 15 feet above the ground to keep them from acting as “fire ladders.”
- ▶ Space shrub islands so that they are at least 10 feet from each other and in pruning the shrubs, keep them from reaching all the way to the ground, prune them to moderate height, and shape them so they are “open” in the center by using “selective” pruning techniques.
- ▶ Don’t let vines climb up trees. Instead, confine them to trellising so if fire were to climb them it would not have anywhere else to go.
- ▶ Keep plants well watered so they are green and succulent, making them slower to reach their “flash point.” This is a situation where a well watered, properly mown lawn is one of the better fire barriers a person could have.
- ▶ Don’t keep trash piles around any longer than necessary, and be sure to stack firewood at least 50 feet from the home – the

same with flammable materials that might be stored in a shed or such things as propane tanks.

For more information on this subject go to the UF Fact Sheet entitled Protecting Your Home from Forest Fires (Drs. M.Monroe and A. Long): <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FR/FR04700.pdf>

PEST OF THE MONTH Slime Mold

by Rebecca Jordi

We have been receiving a large number of phone calls regarding slime mold on turfgrass. According to Monica Elliott, Associate Professor, Ft. Lauderdale Research and Education Center the causal agents are the slime mold genera *Physarum* or *Fuligo*. Slime molds can be found on any warm season grass. They are most prevalent following prolonged periods of leaf wetness and may be observed from late spring to late fall. Although not directly damaged by slime molds, the aesthetic quality of a turfgrass stand may be affected. The slime mold is using the grass blade for structural support only. Slime molds are saprophytes, which means they feed on dead or decaying material. The food source of this mold is not derived from the grass blade, but nutrients are taken from dead and decaying matter in the soil or in lawngrass thatch. The ideal conditions to produce slime molds are long periods of leaf wetness, which is why it is best to irrigate early in the morning. Areas with poor drainage or heavy soils



provide additional environmental conditions for slime mold breeding.

Slime mold colors vary from bright yellows and oranges to dull grays and greens. When dry weather returns or irrigation is reduced the slime mold will disappear. Application of chemicals is not required nor recommended.

FLORIDA FRIENDLY PREDATOR Mole Cricket Nematode *Steinernema scapterisci*

by Raymond Zerba

The Mole Cricket Nematode (*Steinernema scapterisci*) has at last been made available to the “average” guy and you should tell your clients about them if they are plagued by mole crickets. It’s early for mole crickets to be very active (other than to be dying as they finish their life cycle and lay eggs for next year) so now would be a good time to let people know about this nematode **but not** to release them.

This nematode was researched and is now patented by the University of Florida and is being released exclusively through Gardens Alive (www.GardensAlive.com) at 513-354-1482). If earlier this spring, areas of lawn look as if someone took their fingers and “churned up” the soil, that’s likely a mole cricket problem (although moles also do a similar thing but to a lesser degree in one small area) that will only get worse in September and into early winter. When active, mole crickets loosen soil and cut roots to the point that grass in the areas they attack dries out and dies as summer comes on. In the past, mole crickets were a major pest to Bahiagrass and Bermudagrass lawns and to a



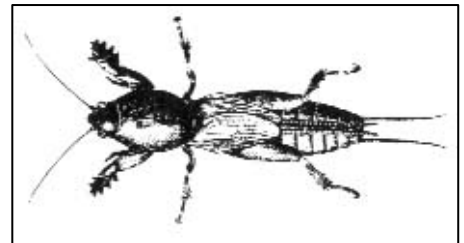
An adult mole cricket infected with bacterium carried by *Steinernema scapterisci*

limited extent to St. Augustinegrass as well. It’s simple to check for them with a “soap flush.”

A soap flush is done by mixing one to two tablespoons of liquid dishwashing detergent in one gallon of water and slowly pouring this back and forth (and back and forth) over a 2 ft square area to thoroughly wet it. Control attempts are justified if 2-4 mole crickets come to the surface within three minutes.

This nematode is available in packets large enough to treat 200, 400 or 1000 sq. ft. areas. They are stored in the refrigerator until ready to use, but for no more than a few weeks. Since this nematode will not attack small mole crickets, now is **not** the time to order or apply them. Instead they would be used only when the mole crickets are 1-1 ½ inches long but still immature (wings not fully grown – see illustration) – September-November and February-April.

Your client must follow directions carefully



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for good results. The nematode must be applied to moist soil and protected from sunlight (dusk or dawn release). Once in the soil, they enter the mouth or breathing pores of the mole cricket, break into their body cavity, and release a highly specialized bacterium that kills the mole cricket within a few days. Offspring of the nematode develop in the dying mole cricket, ultimately being released back to the soil to infect more crickets. One treatment will continue to work for as long as there are mole crickets to infect so this is an excellent biological (non-chemical) control.

Unfortunately, it is considered the equivalent of a "pesticide" so that a Limited CLM Certification will not permit application. Only licensed PCO's and the homeowner themselves can apply these nematodes to a lawn.

To become more knowledgeable on this relatively new Bio-control, go to <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/IN/IN67400.pdf> to read the UF Fact Sheet "How to Use Beneficial Nematodes Against Pest Mole Crickets in Home Lawns."

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Oak-Leaf Hydrangea

Hydrangea quercifolia

by Pamela Mattis



Oak-Leaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) is one of the great under utilized South-eastern native shrubs for Florida. In fact it's thought of so highly in Alabama they

made it the state wildflower in 1999.

This hydrangea has a much larger mature size than the more common garden hydrangea (*H. macrophylla*) and has a courser texture do to the size of the foliage and blooms. Because of these characteristics the oak-leaf hydrangea is better suited for use in larger lots and more natural settings. One or two would give a sufficient display for an average urban lot.

The plant gets its name from the foliage. The leaves range in length from eight to twelve inches and most have five lobes similar to the white oak but can vary between three and seven lobes. Leaves are arranged in an opposite pattern along the branches. The petioles are covered in a rusty pubescence that is also found on the new growth. Older growth along the branches have prominent lenticels and cinnamon to tan exfoliating bark.

But the most dramatic feature of this shrub is the blooms. Terminal panicles, some as long as 12 inches, form on the previous season growth in May and June. The outer sterile flowers open a creamy white and gradually age to a pinkish color through the summer. By fall the blooms have dried to a rusty brown and are still putting on a display. The flowers of this hydrangea do not change color with the soil pH like *H. macrophylla*.



The shrub grows best in slightly alkaline, moist, well-drained soils in partial to full shade. Although the flower display is best with some morning sun. It is not salt tolerant and will need supplemental water during a drought and may show premature color under drought stress.

Pests are few and none are noted as serious. There are several cultivars on the market, 'Harmony', 'Snow Queen', and 'Snowflake', a double "flowered" variety. Propagation can be from seeds, cutting or from the suckers.

SEASONAL QUESTIONS FROM THE LANDSCAPE

With replies for the professional

Q. Do you have any information about getting rid of crab grass in St. Augustine grass?

R. There is no easy solution I'm sorry to say. How to get rid of the weed depends on the size of the area in the lawn that is infested. If it is small patches a non-selective weed killer like Roundup can be used to kill the area and then grass plugs or a piece of St. Augustine sod can be planted. Currently there is no herbicide for killing mature crabgrass that will not harm other plants.

For the long term control of crabgrass two things can be done.

- ▶ First, bag up the clippings from the crabgrass areas when you mow so you are not spreading the seeds throughout the rest of your lawn.
- ▶ Second, in January or February next year use a pre-emergent herbicide in the areas where you have



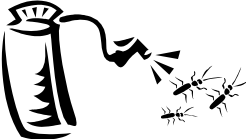

the crabgrass. Many companies advertise weed and feed products to do this but these do not always work on crabgrass in St. Augustine-grass because the fertilizer is used by the weeds and not the grass. It's a timing issue. The grass doesn't use the fertilizer until about April but the herbicide needs to be down much earlier when the weeds are starting to grow. **PM**

Q. Does the amount of pesticide absorbed through the skin depend on skin type? JJ

R. Actually the skin type is not the most important factor when pesticides come in contact with the dermal tissue (the outer layer of skin). I am quoting your answer from Applying Pesticides Correctly. The type of pesticide is the most important factor regarding how much pesticide gets through your skin. "Emulsifiable concentrates (EC), oil-based liquid pesticides, and oil based diluents (such as xylene) are, in general, absorbed most readily. Water-based pesticides and dilutions (such as soluble powders and dry flowables) usually are absorbed less readily than oil-based liquid formulations." However, it is important to note that water-based liquids move more rapidly through the skin than dry formulations. In addition, hot sweaty skin more readily absorbs pesticides than dry, cool skin. An open wound or cut in the skin will also allow for pesticide to get into the body. Look for evidence of skin exposure by watching for rashes, blistering, itching or skin discoloration. Be sure to alert your supervisor if you notice any changes. What is the old football adage? "The best offense is a good defense." Avoid unnecessary exposure – safety first. **RJ**

LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE FOR THE MONTH - JUNE

(Northeast Florida)

Topic	Turfgrass	Ornamentals
<p>Irrigation</p> 	<p>Water as needed or 3/4 inch twice a week if there is no rain.</p>	<p>Woody ornamentals may need to be watered weekly unless there is a rainfall event with at least 3/4 of an inch.</p> <p>Exceptions are newly planted shrubs and trees, keep the root ball moist. This often requires property owner to hand water. Irrigation systems are designed for turfgrass.</p>
<p>Fertilization</p> 	<p>2nd Fertilizer application of year to turf (if fertilizing 3 times per season). Irrigate with 1/4 inch water after application.</p> <p>If the turf is under severe drought stress do not fertilize.</p>	<p>No fertilizer this month.</p>
<p>Weed Control</p>	<p>With temperatures in the nineties, spot treat weedy areas with post-emergent herbicide if the client insists. It would be better to wait for cooler temperatures and some regular rainfall to apply any herbicides since the turf is already under severe drought stress this year.</p>	<p>Spot treat with post emergent herbicides being careful not to contact foliage of the ornamentals.</p>
<p>Pest Concerns</p> 	<p>If mole crickets have been a problem, this month is best time to treat in NE Florida to control the young as they hatch out.</p> <p>Chinch bugs are getting more active and will quickly cause damage during hot, dry periods. when grass is already under a lot of stress.</p>	<p>Using pest resistant plants and putting the "Right Plant in the Right Place" will minimize serious problems, eliminating the need for regular/ scheduled spraying.</p>
<p>Mowing/Pruning Activity</p>	<p>Mow high during drought and high temperatures. Mow frequently enough so not more than 1/3 grass blade length is removed with each cut.</p>	<p>Do minimum pruning on shrubs and trees removing only diseased or injured woody material</p>
<p>Other</p>	<p>Irrigate shrub, and flowering annual/perennial beds with low volume irrigation (as needed) rather than overhead sprinklers to minimize leaf spot diseases.</p>	

TRAINING CLASSES

DATE	PROGRAM
<p>July 3 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM</p>	<p>Landscape Maintenance series—Ornamental Insects To make reservations for class phone 387-8850. Please give class title, name and business phone number to receptionist. Class Fee: \$ 5.00</p>
<p>July 5 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM</p>	<p>BMP Training Session Where: Duval County Extension Office, 1010 N. McDuff Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32254</p> <p>Why Attend: Workshop designed to familiarize attendees with the BMPs for Protecting Florida Water Resources. Upon completion attendees will be listed on the State (UF) website as BMP trained and a certificate will be issued for all with 80% or better post test score.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Registration form included \$10.00 fee</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2 CORE CEUs 3 Comm. L&O or 3 O&T or 3 Limited L&O or 3 Priv. Applicator or 2 Limited CLM CEUs</p>
<p>July 10 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM</p>	<p>Landscape Scouting for the Spanish Speaking Worker Limited class space (20) IPM Scouting kits will be supplied</p> <p>Full day workshop that includes classroom instruction and outdoor practical applications</p> <p>Call Pam Mattis for more details</p>

Agendas and registration forms may be downloaded from:
<http://www.coj.net/Departments/Agriculture/Agricultural+Programs/Commercial+Horticulture.htm>

Next ID Cardholder Training

TOPIC	DATE
BMPs, Fate of Pesticides in the Environment, and Scouting as an IPM Strategy	September 11, 2007

Training for ID cardholders as prescribed under Chapter 482 will be offered quarterly. Session will be 4 hours with topics that meet both new and recurring training requirements. Sign up can be for either 2 or 4 hours. A \$5.00 materials fee per technician, registration in advance requested.

Local EXTENSION Offices

Clay County
 2463 SR 16 West
 Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
 (904) 284-6355
<http://clay.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Duval County
 1010 N. McDuff Avenue
 Jacksonville FL 32254
 (904) 387-8850
 FAX 387-8902
<http://www.coj.net/Departments/Agriculture/>

Nassau County
 543350 US Highway 1
 Callahan, FL 32011-6486
 (904) 879-1019
<http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/>

Putnam County
 111 Yelvington Rd., Ste. 1
 East Palatka, FL 32131-2114
 (386) 329-0318
<http://putnam.ifas.ufl.edu/>

St. Johns County
 3125 Agriculture Center Drive
 St. Augustine, FL 32092
 (904) 209-0430
<http://stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu/>



Newsletter Team

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**MONTHLY
 Landscape Maintenance Series
 Schedule
 2007**

Topic	Time	Date
Insects of Ornamentals	08:30 AM to 10:30 AM	July 3, 2007
Diseases of Ornamentals	08:30 AM to 10:30 AM	August 8, 2007
Irrigation Basics	08:30 AM to 10:30 AM	Sept. 6, 2007
Equipment Maintenance	08:30 AM to 10:30 AM	Nov. 2, 2007

This is your newsletter, so please, let us know what you want to read about each month. Pamela Mattis can be reached at (904) 387-8850 or pmattis@coj.net. Ray Zerba can be reached at (904) 284-6355 or rzerba@ufl.edu. Rebecca Jordi can be reached at (904)879-1019 or rjordi@ufl.edu.

For individuals requiring special accommodations, please contact our office (904/387-8850) within a minimum of 5 working days of the program. For persons with hearing or speech impairments, when contacting our office, please use the Florida Relay Service at 1-800-955-8771 (TDD). Your comments and input are necessary for this to be a useful tool for all of us.

This newsletter, past newsletters, links and registration forms for Commercial Horticulture activities can be found at the Duval County Extension website <http://www.coj.net/Departments/Agriculture/Agricultural+Programs/default.htm>

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