

The Scoop from the Soil Up

July-August Edition

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Stopping Summer Storm Spoilage:

How to maintain your landscaping through hurricane season

by Melanie Albright

Thanks to Tropical Storm Debby and other extreme weather that will follow her in the coming months our landscaping will be put through harsh endurance tests from the high winds to heavy rains. Here are some tips that will help maintain your landscaping throughout hurricane season and prevent messes from piling up into disasters:

Fallen Trees

A smaller tree has a better chance of being saved than a larger one, but still may need to have a stake support system for up to two years to reestablish the root system. Any exposed roots should be covered, either with soil or moist burlap, to prevent permanent damage. It may be best to remove the tree altogether, as a weak root system is less apt to withstand the next storm, i.e. becoming a potential safety hazard.

Exposed Roots & Loosened Roots

Covering any exposed roots with soil should be done as soon as possible, but not in excess of the level it had been before it was uncovered. Putting too much soil atop the root will cut off oxygen supplies to the root system. Treat a leaning tree like a newly planted tree, adding stakes around it for support. Replace and firm the soil around the area to assure that no air pockets are around the roots.

Broken Branches

To prevent further damage to the tree, as well as to prevent a safety hazard, broken branches should be removed immediately. Cutting off branches is most successfully done with separate cuts, starting from the underside of the branch to remove the possibility of tearing the tree. If a tree has lost all of its branches, it is advisable to remove the tree.

Debris-Covered Lawns

After a storm with heavy winds, there will likely be a lot of debris on your lawn, which needs to be removed as soon as possible so your sod does not suffocate, leading to brown patches. Removing all debris will also give the lawn a chance to dry out, avoiding any diseases caused by the rain.

Watering

Plants or trees with root damage may need more frequent irrigation, but do not oversaturate your plant-life. The heavy rains will likely be enough to turn off your irrigation system. Also note that in Pinellas, Hillsborough and Pasco County, lawn and landscape watering is limited to one day a week, through July 31, 2012. Watering is prohibited between 8am and 6pm, and any observed violations will result in a \$193 fine.

Keeping your landscaping maintained throughout hurricane season will not only allow it to thrive and stay beautiful, but will also prevent any further damage or safety hazards that may arise otherwise. From varying degrees of upset root systems and broken branches, to debris covered and drenched lawns, these tips will help your yard be at its best, rain or shine.



Q&A: *Plumeria Rust* and Methods of Prevention

Cindy asks: I have a Plumeria that keeps getting this orange colored fuzzy stuff on the underside of the leaves. And when you touch it, your fingers look like you've been eating Cheetos! (I call it the Cheeto disease.) What can I do to get rid of it?

The Scoop answers: The problem Cindy is having is a fungus called Plumeria rust that presents itself as tiny, raised, bright yellow or yellow-orange powdery pustules on the underside of the leaves. The spores are easily rubbed from the leaves, explaining why when Cindy touches them it looks as if she's been eating Cheetos. On the upper leaf surface, yellow spots are visible. Plumeria rust can lead to premature defoliation of all of the plant's leaves.

Why? Plumeria rust is carried by the wind from infected leaves and leaf debris, sticking to moist leaves of uninfected plants under wet or humid conditions. Heavy leaf canopy, reduced temperatures, and more moisture and humidity can all promote spread and growth of the disease.

Treat? Remove and throw away any infected leaves, whether they are still attached to the Plumeria or have fallen off, and do at first sign of disease. Then spray the remaining leaves with an approved fungicide to prevent additional rust development. Follow label instructions and rotate between fungicide products with different modes of action to inhibit the development of fungicide resistance in the fungus.

Prevent? To prevent the disease from forming new infections, plant your Plumerias in drier, less humid areas. While this can prove to be a difficult task in Central West Florida, we can reduce relative humidity and increase air flow in Plumeria canopy by preventing tall weeds from growing near Plumeria trees as well as not overcrowding Plumeria. Wider spacing will enhance aeration in the canopy

and the drying of leaf surfaces after rainfall. Another way to prevent the fungus is to mix Plumerias with other plants that are not hosts of the rust disease. Space out Plumeria to increase air circulation and remove some of the leaves or branches late in the season to thin out the canopy.

Anything else? Plumeria rust is very difficult to get rid off and, with our climate, nearly unavoidable.



Here's an Idea!

Xeriscaping is a low-maintenance landscape solution that is perfect for reducing the time and money spent on lawn care needs, especially in the Floridian summer and its scorching heat and relentless rains. During this time, your lawn maintenance needs may spike with the rise in weed and plant growth that excess rain brings as well as with problems associated with heat damage. Not only are the benefits of having a xeriscaped yard seen through reduced maintenance for any season (from water conservation to not needing fertilizers or pesticides, and more), but also through improving your property value, compensating for the cost of installation. Furthermore, xeriscaping reduces fossil fuel consumption from gas mowers as well as provides a habitat for wildlife.

Thank you for reading *The Scoop*. If you have any landscaping-related questions, please email info@albrightlandscaping.com and your question and answer will appear in the next issue of *The Scoop from the Soil Up*.

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