

Summer Tips for Homeowners

Grasses — There are two categories of grasses commonly used in this area: warm season and cool season.

Warm season grasses, Zoysia, Bermuda and Centipede may be cut at lower heights than cool season grasses. The optimum mowing height for these grasses is 1/2" to 1 1/2".

Cool season grass, Fescue, should be mowed at 3" or above, retaining as much of the blade as possible.

Mowing Tips —

- Whenever possible, restrict cutting to no more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a time.
- Rinse underneath mower after each use to remove build-up of cut grass which could spread fungal diseases.
- Mow when dry to avoid clumping, so that clippings do not need to be bagged. Clippings left on the lawn add nitrogen back into the soil; however, large clumps of grass left on the lawn can cause fungus.

- Alternate mowing patterns each week to avoid soil compaction and rutting.
- Sharpen and balance blades frequently throughout the mowing season.
- Avoid filling mower with gas on the lawn; spills can kill grass.

Pruning — Heavy pruning and shaping should have been done during winter and early spring. At this time of year, prune only for shaping and maintenance. Many shrubs will be putting out a good bit of new growth right now. New growth appears light green, which stands out, leading people to think it needs to be pruned. Yet pruning encourages *more* growth, and perpetuates the problem. So give the shrub a few weeks for this growth to “harden off” before pruning. At that time you can best determine how to shape it.

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Planting Right, the Landscaper's Delight!

As maintenance contractors, many times we are asked to correct certain landscaping problems that could have been avoided with minimal planning. There is nothing sadder than seeing a large tree squeezed into a tiny yard or shrubs flattened against a building. Choosing the proper plant for the given environmental conditions might take some research, but it will pay off in the end. Here are some hints:

- **Know the light conditions where you are planting** — full sun, partial shade, or shade — and learn the light requirements of your plants. For example, a shade-loving plant, like Aucuba, might burn in full sun. By contrast, Crape Myrtles placed in dense shade might not bloom at all. While some grasses, like Fescue, will thrive in partial shade there are few that can tolerate dense shade. If you have an area that receives little light, try a ground cover like ivy or liriopse.
- **Remember that immature seedlings will eventually grow to their maximum height and spread.** When you purchase a plant from the nursery, find out how much it's expected to grow. Then, when you're planting, be sure to leave enough room for that tree or shrub to reach maturity!
- **Check the drainage and soil of the desired planting location.** If there is standing water, drainage conditions might have to be altered. Very few plants like “wet feet.”



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Behind the Scenes — Miguel & Juan Tejada, Two of a Kind

Any company feels extremely fortunate to have an employee who is hard working, intelligent, polite, stable and reliable. Nature Scapes has two who equally match that description. These “two of a kind” just happen to be brothers.

Miguel is a supervisor in our maintenance department while Juan is a supervisor in the landscape department. Both men have been with us now for 7 years. They came here from Aqua Caliente, El Salvador, where Miguel lives on a farm and Juan lives in the city. Both wives stay with their children there, and Juan’s oldest daughter, Sylvia, is currently attending medical school.

The brothers work hard and send home their earnings to make a better life for their families. One phone call per month is the sole communication each has with his kin. However, both return for a couple of months each year to visit. We are always glad to see their smiling faces when they come back to Nature Scapes. The brothers plan to work here another 15 years before retiring to El Salvador.

Hats off to Miguel and Juan Tejada. Thanks for your hard work and dedication!



Juan (left) and Miguel Tejada

Rick’s Pick

Natchez Crape Myrtle,
Lagerstroemia x ‘Natchez’

This is my favorite Crape Myrtle because of its large white blooms, cinnamon colored bark and the “weepy” shape of its growth. The Crape Myrtle is considered a small tree, growing to about 20' in height with a light and airy canopy. Its exfoliating (shedding) bark and multi-trunked form give it year-round eye appeal. The Natchez Crape is noted for its glossy green, mildew-resistant foliage. Blooms first appear in early July and continue abundantly all summer in full sun. Yet the trees can tolerate partial shade. Crape Myrtles prefer well-drained soil and are drought tolerant, once they are established.

These trees are often pruned improperly. Tip pruning is the preferred method and is done by cutting the tip of the stem where the dead flower clusters are retained after blooming. Remove any small twigs underneath the canopy as well. Stump pruning (cutting foliage back to the trunks) should only be practiced in certain circumstances. This method of pruning forces the tree to produce twiggy new growth and creates large nodules on the stump. Although such pruning will cause it to bloom abundantly, the tree loses its sculptured appearance.



— *Crape Myrtle Bloom*

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- **Consider volume.** When planting a grouping, be sure to space plants far enough apart so they will not crowd each other, but close enough so they will eventually grow together and mass.
- **Consider textures.** For example, a light airy texture will not show up well on a large open bank. A good rule of thumb when considering textures: the shorter the distance from plant to observer, the easier it is to see. Thus a fine texture will show best when viewed close up, and a coarse-textured plant is better to use when the scene will be viewed from a distance.

Other factors to consider when planning your landscape:

- Do you prefer evergreen or deciduous trees and shrubbery? (Do you like to see a changing landscape and don't mind raking leaves or would you prefer a constant view?)
- Do you want a formal look or a naturalistic look?
- Do you prefer plants that require high maintenance (need to be pruned often) or low (have desired shape and appearance without pruning)?
- Where will you place the focal point? What eye-interest are you looking for? (Blooms, fall color, multi-seasonal appeal, color-contrasting accents?)

These questions should help you with the plant selection process. However, for major refurbishment or new construction, it's always best to consult a landscape architect. Take time to consider these suggestions now and you won't be sorry later!



Our Garden's Guests

By introducing natural elements into urban and suburban landscapes, we can all make an important contribution to the environment. Butterfly gardens are one way to assist the survival of a very special species. Lepidoptera have fascinated me since childhood. Because they go through four life stages, it is a wonder there are any to be seen. Every year, it does seem there are fewer.

Butterflies are cold-blooded and need sunlight to warm the muscles they use to fly. Internal temperatures for the wing muscles must be about 75 to 110 degrees for vigorous flight. So place attracting plants in a warm, sunny location. Because their flight demands a lot of energy, butterflies must have the carbohydrates found in nectar.

Flower Favorites — They prefer heavy perfume to delicate scents and are first attracted to flowers by their color. Thus, groups of flowers are appealing. And they seem to prefer purple, yellow, orange and red-colored blossoms. Clusters of short, tubular flowers or flat-topped blossoms provide the ideal shapes for butterflies to land easily and feed. These wonderful insects are active from early spring to late fall, so plant a selection of flowers that will provide nectar throughout the growing season.

Gardening Trade-Offs — If you want an exceptional butterfly garden, prepare to compromise: traditional pesticides are taboo. Substitute insecticidal soap (but never use it on host plants listed below). Avoid using slug pellets, and don't cry when you come out one afternoon to find your parsley

— **Pamela Lasota** stripped to the stem in just a few hours.

Butterflies in their larval stage (caterpillars) can be destructive. However, they are very selective eaters, and will starve rather than eat another type of vegetation. So as larvae, they may eat elsewhere, only visiting your garden for nectar as adults. This year I plan to plant extra parsley and fennel in my garden, just for the caterpillars. Those plants seem to be among their favorites. The caterpillars I found munching last year were Tiger Swallowtails, our state butterfly!

Other Plants Which Attract Butterflies — *Host Plants (appeal to caterpillars)* – Bloodflower, Butterflyweed, Parsley, Dill, Copper Fennel, Maypop, Blue Passionflower, Spicebush, Tulip Tree. *Shrubs* – *Glossy Abelia, *Azalea, *Butterfly Bush. *Annuals* – Cosmos, *Impatiens, *Lantana, *Marigold, *Zinnia. *Perennials* – *Aster x frikartii, *Bee Balm, *Butterfly Milkweed, Daisies, *Daylily, Phlox, Purple Coneflower, and Sedum. (*Attracts Hummingbirds too!)

Source Material — For more information, write the Education Department • Ida Cason Callaway Foundation • Pine Mountain, GA 31822 or phone 706-663-5153.



These Flowers Are Brought To You By...

Our goal is to bring personal pleasure to every homeowner and curb appeal to the property of every business we serve. Therefore, we take great care in designing beds and choosing just the right plants in just the right colors to fill those beds. And we have found the perfect grower to help us!

History — Nine years ago, Nature Scapes was referred to the Smith Plant Factory, where we met a gentleman by the name of Dayton Smith. Dayton is a Georgia Tech graduate, who retired after working in the Textile industry for over 30 years. His love of nature and the personal pleasure he derived from cultivating plants led Dayton to his current vocation.

Ten years ago he founded the Smith Plant Factory. The business began with 5 greenhouses and 10,000 square feet of growing space. Today the Smiths manage 12 greenhouses, covering over 32,000 square feet. Back then, they started with no patrons. Now this wholesale business serves landscaping companies and retail garden centers all over metropolitan Atlanta. Callaway Gardens and Six Flags also number among their satisfied customers.

Personnel — Dayton's success is not only due to his own hard work and extensive knowledge, but also the work and skills of his son, Doug. Doug graduated from Berry College

— **Cynthia Upchurch**

with a degree in Business Administration. He and his father employ approximately nine part-time employees. Another son, Clay, is also part of the team that helps this business thrive. And last, but certainly not least, I should mention Barbara Smith, Dayton's wife and one of the Factory's most helpful associates.

Quality Service — Doing business with the Smith Plant Factory has always been a pleasure for us. This family truly provides the most down-to-earth, respectful, I'll-do-my-best-for-you service we have ever encountered.

Planting Seasons — Spring marks the busiest time of the year for them. Last April we purchased all the lovely color you are now enjoying. By the end of July, Doug and Dayton will be hard at work, planting Poinsettias from seed to be ready for this coming Christmas season. During that process, the greenhouses are a great pleasure to visit, as they are filled with the Poinsettias' vivid flames of red!

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Smith Plant Factory for all their hard work and assistance in helping to make the properties and homes we serve appealing to all eyes, young and old!

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Watering — The hot days of summer are here. Be sure to water when things get dry. Containerized plants and newly planted material need to be watered daily during dry spells.

Weed Control — Weeds can be controlled by hand or by herbicide. Before selecting a herbicide, read the label to be sure it targets the weed you want to control.

Spraying Tips

- Spray moderately and notice the wind conditions to avoid drift.
- Be sure spray doesn't touch other plants.
- If you are wearing shoes with rubber soles, do not walk through areas where spray is wet. It can travel with you, killing grass and other plants where you walk. Also take care not to drag water hoses through those areas. They too can spread the herbicide.
- Hand-pull weeds in ivy beds and other areas where contact with desired plants is likely.

Insect Alert — We had a temperate, damp winter this year. Those conditions promote insect growth, so be prepared for great quantities of unwanted visitors this summer! If you have questions concerning insect infestation, contact your County Extension Agent. When you call, it is best to know the host plant (the one infested) and be able to give a description of the damage or bug (such as "mottled, yellow leaves" or "light green, small insects"). It may be necessary to take a cutting to someone who can identify it. The Extension Agent will give you information on what measures are currently available to control certain insects. Local Extension Service Phone Numbers: Cobb County 528-2445; DeKalb County 371-2821 and 370-8198 (gardening teletips); Fulton County 730-7000.

When using insecticides, always follow these three rules —
1. Read the label! 2. Read the label! 3. Read the label!

+ — Odds & Ends —

Safety Update As of May 1, 1995 —

Number of days without an injury: 172.

Number of days without a service accident: 30.

Looking For Work? —

Nature Scapes, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We are always looking for people with the potential to become permanent, dedicated employees. Anyone interested in joining our team may contact our office on weekdays between the hours of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

Who We Are

Cultivated News is published four times a year by Nature Scapes, Inc., for over ten years a provider of landscaping, maintenance, irrigation and floriculture services to the metropolitan Atlanta area.

Nature Scapes, Inc. is a charter member of GGIA – Georgia Green Industry Association, MALTA – Metro Atlanta Landscape & Turf Association and GTAI – Georgia Turfgrass Association, Inc. We also belong to the Southern Nurseryman's Association.

Natures Scapes, Inc. operates a drug-free workplace, as certified by the State Board of Workers' Compensation.

If you have any topics or questions you would like to see discussed or elaborated on in a future issue of this newsletter, please call and let us know.

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