Nature Scapes INC.

Cultivated News

News & Notes From the Ground Up • Volume 3, No. 2 • Summer 1997

Watering — The Critical Step For New Plantings

— Rick Barnes

The landscape crews at Nature Scapes spend a great deal of time and energy renovating and upgrading the landscape plantings on the grounds that we maintain. After our work is done, your help is crucial to keeping them alive and thriving! Here are a few simple facts and procedures for watering a newly planted landscape.

Deciding when and how much to water can be relatively easy when you know a few basics about plants and seasons. Although metro-Atlanta's average annual rainfall works out to approximately 1 inch per week, it doesn't occur in that regular pattern. If it did, we would rarely have to water. But those who have lived here awhile know that our winters can be soggy and our summers can be very hot and dry.

Established versus New Plantings

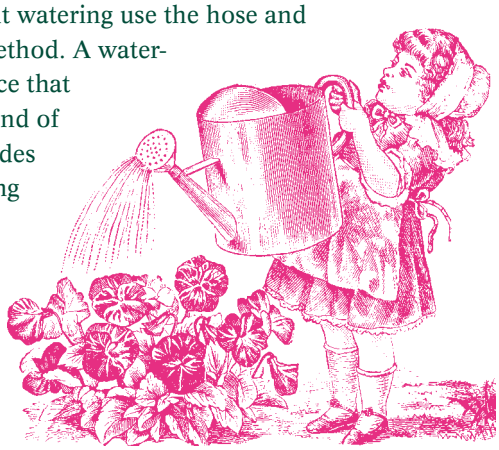
One inch *per week* is the magic number for established plantings, but new installations may require much more while plant root systems become established in the surrounding soil. For new plantings, 1 inch per *watering,* is usually quite adequate. Don't be fooled by brief summer showers, however. What you think was heavy rainfall may only amount to one or two tenths of an inch. Put a rain gauge in your yard to see for yourself.

Watering and Temperature

Temperature is another key factor. Typically, new plants need only to be watered *once or twice a week during the cooler months* (November to March), but the same plants can need *daily* watering when temperatures are high. That's because Atlanta's predominantly clay soils are slow to dry in cold air and slow to wet in warm.

How To and How Long

For most efficient watering use the hose and water-breaker method. A water-breaker is a device that screws into the end of a hose and provides a gentle sprinkling of water directly around and beneath the foliage of a new plant. (Note: This is not the



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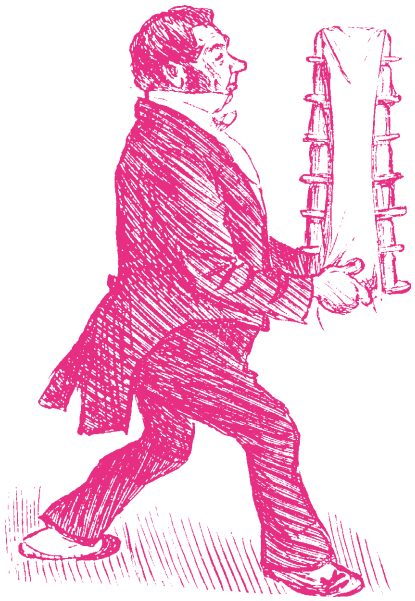
Luncheon Party For Property Managers



On March 10, the managers of Nature Scapes staged a luncheon for the property managers who oversee our maintenance accounts. This informative repast was given to better equip them to deal with questions from homeowners. Also in attendance was guest speaker Walter Reeves, DeKalb County Extension Agent and host of news talk 750 WSB Radio's Saturday morning gardening program.

"It was interesting to view the issues of landscape management from the property manager's perspective," said Walter. Rick Upchurch, President of Nature Scapes added, "their position forces them to acquire expertise in many fields, including Horticulture."

The luncheon's informative portion centered around the themes of "why we do what we do when we do it," and "dispelling the myths about landscaping." Dale Stephens introduced himself and David Johnson as Nature Scapes route managers. Rodney Anderson, manager of our chemical division, spoke about our turf, tree and shrub programs, as well as Nature Scapes' efforts to ensure public safety when we apply chemicals. Rick Barnes, Vice President of Nature Scapes, talked about some of the myths about landscaping. And Walter Reeves described how nature challenges landscape management. Rick Upchurch closed the gathering by saying he hoped this was the first of many such informative lunches.

Providing Instant Shade

Planting a tree is all in a day's work at Nature Scapes, but planting this tree took a little more effort than most. One day last December, the installation staff watched and waited as a 25 foot tall Oak tree floated through the air, hoisted into place by a 60 foot crane.

The tree, a Shumard Oak *(Quercus shumardi)* is native to the Eastern U.S. and made an excellent choice for the site — the upper entrance island of Hart Homes' new Fairway Estates development at Lenox Park. The Oak had a caliper (trunk diameter 18 inches above the ground) of 10 inches and a root ball measuring 96 inches wide by 42 inches tall. Weighing in at approximately 14,200 pounds, the tree was shipped to the site on its own flatbed truck. Upon its installation, the Oak instantly provided a park-like atmosphere and a focal point for the Fairway Estates entry.

The emergence of foliage this Spring indicated that the transplanting has been successful. Success was ensured by the fact that the timing of the move was ideal, the installation itself went very smoothly, and the tree was grown and conditioned by Shady Grove Plantation of Orangeburg, South Carolina. One of the finest tree farms in the industry, Shady Grove has been in the business of growing and transplanting big trees for nearly 60 years. As a final touch, we have added a custom-made, mahogany bench which circles the tree's base.

Installation of Shumard Oak at Fairway Estates

Watering from page 1

same device as the pressure-gun we use for washing cars. Pressure guns can blast the soil right out of planting holes and leave plant roots exposed.) Depending on how well the water moves down in the soil, the same plant may need to be sprinkled *more than once per application* to ensure a thorough soaking.

"Establishment period" refers to the amount of time it takes for plant roots to work their way into surrounding soil deeply enough to resist adverse environmental conditions. The critical establishment period for most plants is 3 weeks. Extreme vigilance should be exercised while it lasts.

This stage may cease after 3 weeks during cooler periods or periods of plentiful rainfall. Yet it may last much longer during summer's heat. While we can relax after the establishment period, it pays to be aware of prevailing weather conditions for much longer. Often, a landscape can take up to *3 years* to become safely established.

Lawns

The same watering rules apply to turf. In cooler months, new *sod* takes a minimum of 3 weeks of daily watering to root down in the soil. New *seed* can take 3 weeks or more to germinate. In summer, the period for daily or bi-weekly waterings lasts longer than in cooler months.

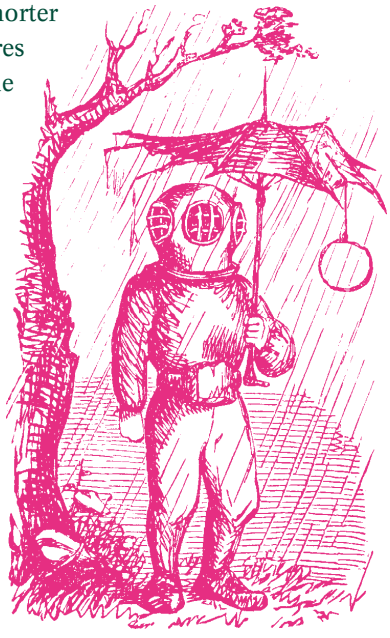
Over-watering

We'd be remiss not to mention the possibility of over-watering! Once you have passed the critical watering period or into a season of higher rainfall or cooler temperatures, don't be afraid to cut back. The predominately clay soils of Atlanta tend to retain water and quickly become saturated, and can cause plants to drown.

Oddly enough, the symptoms for over-watering look the same as those for drought. So seek advice if plants do not look right when you are maintaining a healthy watering regimen.

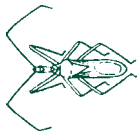
In summary:

- The critical watering period for new plants is 3 weeks.
- Daily watering is generally required at that time.
- The critical period may be longer during hot weather, or shorter during cooler temperatures or periods of frequent one inch rainfalls.
- An adequate watering/rainfall measures one inch.
- For the best application, use the "hose and water breaker" method.
- Water directly underneath and around new plants.
- Each individual plant may need to be watered more than once per application if the water tends to run off quickly.



Chemical Use On Plants — Why? — *Rodney Anderson*

When should we use chemicals on plant material and why? Many people do not like using pesticides on plants because of the harm it may bring to the environment or because of the *perceived* harm it may bring to people and pets. From this writer's point-of-view, the less we use, the safer it is for everyone. And by using proper landscape management practices, the need for using chemicals can be greatly reduced.


Assassin Bug

Identify the Pest

Before using any insecticides, you should be absolutely certain what insect you wish to control. For example, a general purpose insecticide will not control spider mites. You have to match the correct pesticide with the insect you are trying to control. (And even then, you will never eliminate all insects of a particular variety.)


Bigeyed Bug

Nip Them in the "Bud"

At certain times of year, even when proper management techniques are being performed, you can count on an outbreak of particular pests: Lacebug on Azaleas in early April, Tent Caterpillars and their nasty tree webbing in mid-April, and if Spider Mites are a problem in early spring, they are *really* a problem on Junipers in late spring/early summer.

Remember, as temperatures rise most insects reproduce more rapidly. When a build-up of these insects causes enough visible damage to plants, and biological controls are not enough, then spraying is important to get them back to a manageable population.


Ground Beetle

A Few Pointers

Always read the label for warnings. Be as accurate as possible when using the mix rate indicated on the label. And again, be sure to use the appropriate insecticide for the target pest. With biological controls, correct management techniques and an effective spray program, it should be possible to maintain healthy, pest- and disease-free plants in the landscape.


Minute Pirate Bug

Biological Control — Why Not!? — *Pamela Lasota*

Biological control means using natural enemies to suppress detrimental insects. In general terms, the idea is to achieve an ecological balance by incorporating disease- and pest-resistant material into the landscape, excluding the use of pesticides, and attracting/maintaining a population of beneficial insects.


Rove Beetle

Making the Choice

I made the decision a few years ago to try and maintain my garden without the use of pesticides. The first summer was difficult: Leaf Rollers invaded the Canna Lilies and Aphids disfigured the Peonies. However, the second summer I caught the Leaf Rollers early and picked them off by hand.

It worked! The garden came into balance, and although pests continued invading different plants, they never got out of control. "Predator" insects would feast on other insects, leaving a few behind to reproduce (and yield another meal). Yet the few left behind never gained the advantage.


Soldier Beetle

Bugs Defined

Good bugs, called "beneficials", are natural enemies to plant-damaging bugs or may be helpful in other ways. Earthworms for example are, as aptly put by Darwin, the "earth's plow". They also help improve the soil's mineral content.


Spined Soldier Bug

Natural enemies are divided into three categories:

- Predators: Attack, kill and eat other insects.
- Parasites: Lay an egg in or on another insect. When the egg hatches, the larvae develops at the expense of its host and eventually the host dies.
- Pathogens: Micro-organisms such as bacteria, fungi or viruses invade a host and cause disease.


Lacewing

It may take some research to identify beneficials, but here are a few that will more than likely be lurking in your garden: Ladybugs, Assassin Bugs, Bigeyed Bugs, Ground Beetles, Syrphid Fly Larva, Ichneumonid Wasps (which eat both predators and parasites), immature Lacewings (not to be confused with Lacebugs), Minute Pirate Bugs, Rove Beetles, Soldier Beetles, Spined Soldier Bugs and Praying Mantis, just to name a few!

See *Bugs* back page

Identifying Plants

Last year Nature Scapes began a "Plant of the Week" program to increase employee awareness regarding the variety of plants used in landscaping. Each week over a period of several months, 2 new plants were introduced, together with their common and botanical names as well as Spanish synonyms. The object was to provide an opportunity for learning to associate each plant in the field with its name.

In January, when the first round of "Plant of the Week" concluded, a final study session was offered. It covered the plants already presented together with some new ones. Then employees were invited to take an optional I.D. test identifying 25 of the 30 plants we had previously introduced.

The competition was so stiff we had to use a "tie breaker" round. The 3rd place winner was Allen Clemons ($10.00), Miguel Tejada came in 2nd place winning $20.00, and Rusty Lee was the prized recipient of a picture of Ulysses S. Grant ($50.00) with his perfect score of 25! The plant of the week program will resume this summer.

How To

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Attracting and keeping the insects we want is very important to maintaining a balance. In order for this to happen, certain basics must be present: food, shelter and water. *Food* is the insects we want to get rid of — sorry, but you have to put up with a few. *Shelter* can be any undisturbed area, even compost or mulch, mainly in areas that are protected from mowing or tilling. Bird baths, shallow containers and even puddles provide *water.* Remember to change the water every few days, to prevent mosquito breeding, and add water during the dry seasons.

The Mixed Approach

Sometimes, in spite of our best efforts to maintain a balance, serious infestations can occur. Then, the use of chemicals is the only practical approach. Other times, on commercially-maintained property for example, the hands-on technique will not be cost-effective. Nature Scapes practices integrated pest management, incorporating both methods whenever possible.

The Chemical Option

By carefully managing your landscape or garden, you can greatly reduce or eliminate the use of chemical pesticides. If you must spray for bugs, be certain which kinds they are. Try to keep sprays contained to the specific area and remember: beneficial insects in general do not recover as quickly from exposure to insecticides as pest insects do.

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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