

Special Issue

February 2010



PLANTATION TRAILS

Tales from the Trails

Overkill

by The Ugly Duck

There are times when suburban life is too close for comfort to being like a skit from Monty Python's Flying Circus. Maybe you remember their bit about hunting mosquitoes? If not, you can view it on YouTube [search key words "mosquito hunting monty python"] to refresh your memory. The comic troupe had a surefire way to bag these insects: bazookas and machine guns. Two swarthy pseudo-Australian bush types stalk then locate their tiny prey, and a series of large explosions and gunfire ensues.

It's perfectly ridiculous.

Even so, we practice this same degree of overkill every year as we go about taking care of the grass in our yard. In our neighborhood fix-it stores, in the section where they keep the lawn-care chemicals, there are herbicides to get rid of everything that's not St. Augustine grass (which, as you know, is the patron saint of the suburbs), pesticides that can actually kill your pets if you're not careful, and fertilizers that I suspect would make me test positive for banned substances after simply walking barefoot across my lawn. These stores offer this colorfully packaged array of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers for sale to the general public without restriction. With such access come certain responsibilities.

Every year, close inshore in the Gulf of Mexico, there's the so-called "dead zone"; it's a phenomenon that we should probably pay close attention to. Fertilizer run-off from the continental U.S. (the part east of the Rockies) accumulates and washes downstream into the rivers and finally into the Gulf, where it causes the algae to go wild. The resulting yearly "algae bloom" causes the depletion of available oxygen in the water, which means that the other species in that area don't have enough oxygen to live. An article in *Scientific American* says that last year's dead zone at the mouth of the Mississippi River covered some 3,000 square miles – that's a *reduction*, believe it or not – and that the 2009 manifestation was more severe than those of years past. (See the article at <http://www.scientificamerican.com/podcast/episode.cfm?id=gulf-of-mexico-dead-zone-shrinks-09-07-27>).

I bet most of us can agree that the less we contribute to such an accumulation of fertilizer – or herbicides, or pesticides – the better it will be for the planet as a whole. But do we have to sacrifice our green lawn to cut down on these chemicals' effects? Happily, answers are available. There are useful web sites that give usage guidelines, list environmentally friendly alternatives, and rate the available products in terms of their overall impact and "half-life." With a little advanced planning and a few minutes of reading, we may find that we can have it all: a green and healthy yard and a less toxic environment generally.

So the next time you're about to fertilize or bugproof your yard, if you feel like you're going after mosquitoes with a bazooka, maybe you are. Check into your more environmentally responsible options and think green.

Here is a list of only a few of the websites out there:

www.southwestfertilizer.com

www.sanjacorganic.com

www.ci.austin.tx.us/growgreen/fert.htm

Starting next month, look for our newsletter on the FCCA website: www.firstcolony.org. On the left hand directory, click on the Communities button, then click Neighborhoods, and follow the Subdivision News! link to Plantation Trails.

Thanks to the Ugly Duck for his help with the newsletter. Contact Vicki at: 28204931

Plantation Trails Woman's Club

Neighborhood events like National Night Out and the Annual Easter Egg Hunt do not happen by accident. These events take some planning. They take some pre-event preparations like buying the food, assembling baskets for door prizes, and stuffing candy in all those eggs. The events also require set-up and tear down.

These events are made possible with the help of a group of hard-working and fun-loving women. They get together to plan these events for the enjoyment of the entire neighborhood. The ladies in the club had so much fun planning these events, that they now meet about four or five times a year just to visit—and eat.

Upcoming events include:

Garage Sale

Easter Egg Hunt

Start Off the Summer Bar-B-Q

All women in the neighborhood are welcome to join in the fun. We would love to meet you and we always need lots of help to make the Neighborhood Parties successful. But you need to get on our e-mailing list so we can let you know when and where the next meeting will be. Contact Yvonne at:

ohsospecial@pdq.net

Lawn Care Calendar

February

1. Apply pre-emergent herbicides for crabgrass.
2. Raise and mulch any azaleas that are planted too low.
3. Prune as necessary.

March

1. After they finish blooming, prune, fertilize and spray azaleas and camellias. Use azalea and camellia fertilizer.
2. Fertilize color plants.
3. Fertilize lawn areas.
4. Apply season-long fire ant control product.

April

1. Remove excess thatch from lawn areas by adjusting mower to its lowest cutting height. Rake and remove clippings.
2. Fertilize all trees and shrubs with a 2:1:1 ratio fertilizer. If possible, fertilizer should always contain iron, sulfur, and other trace elements.
3. Begin changing from winter flowering plants to summer flowering plants.
4. Plant caladiums.

Year-round

Turf grass needs 1 inch of water per week; set automatic sprinklers to run early in the morning; adjust watering according to the amount of rainfall received each week. Maintain mulch in landscape beds. Remove yellowed or unsightly foliage from plants. Prune broken and dead branches from trees.