

Question: What can I plant in my yard for color this summer?

Answer: Good question. There are low growing summer annuals such as Gerbera Daisy, Crossandra, Coleus, Torenia, Gomphera, Gaillardia(Blanket Flower) and Caladiums to name a few. Then there are plants which bloom on and off throughout the year and provide color These plants require at least 1-3 feet at their base to grow and can reach heights of 3-8 feet or more. They are Firespike, Firebush, Bush Daisy, Croton, Thunbergia, Thryallis, and Oleander.

Question:What can I do to prepare my yard for the possibility of heavy winds?

Answer: Never prune or trim your trees once the threat of a storm is upon us. Waste pick up is suspended and as a good neighbor, you'd want to put your trimmings indoors. Trimming your trees to allow winds to pass through them is desired. Remove any dead limbs and coconuts which could become projectiles. It is a good idea to trim any plants around the house, away from the house. Then they will not interact with windows, or gutters. This notion is also used to keep insects from coming into the house.

Q: I have heard that I shouldn't plant trees in my swale. Can you tell me why I shouldn't plant anything in my swale?

This is a loaded question. Most of us have the mind set that, "the swale is part of my property and I should be able to do as I please." First, let me explain that here in S. FL. the land between the street and the sidewalk is called a, "swale." This area exists as a drainage easement. The swale, is graded and lower in the middle so that it should collect rainwater, and keep the roadway clear. When the swale functions properly, it will collect water, and distribute it toward a storm drain. With that in mind, planting a tree in the swale will disturb this process, by creating an obstacle in the path the water needs to take. Second reason. Should a driver lose control of a vehicle, a tree in a swale can be an obstacle in yet another way. If you must plant in your swale, I'd strongly consider planting in the top third of the swale the part closest to the sidewalk. KEEP in MIND, that P.B.County may enter onto the property, and re-grade a swale at no cost to you. As a homeowner in Pheasant Walk at the time of this printing, your only responsibility to this area is to maintain and irrigate the sod. Your irrigation could be removed by the county as they recommend that we have our irrigation in the top third of the swale. At least it was a s such, when the front section of our community underwent re-grading due to severe flooding.

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Good question. Not one of my favorite plants! I can write that, right? Mostly since the plant has nasty thorns. Now however there is a thornless variety available. Bougainvillea love neglect (lack of water)& abuse (cut it back), seriously.

Want your shrub to be full, cut the long sticks back. Stagger the heights if you have several branches growing vertically. Don't be afraid to cut as low as 5 above the ground. That will give more dimension to the plant. Another good reason to cut it back, is so that the plant if on a fence, doesn't become top heavy. The plant does best, flowers more in full sun. It won't have many bracts (the colorful leaves) if you continually prune it.

Q: I always use Bonus S Weed & Feed for my lawn, that I buy at Costco or Wal-Mart. Is there anything better that isn't a lot of money or is Bonus S a good product? All garden centers carry weed and feed products. Once our S.FL. temperatures climb over 85 degrees most of these products shouldn't be used.

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You can run the risk of losing your grass as well as the weeds. In the summer months rather than using a fertilizer use an Ironizer to green up your lawn. Many of the weed and feed products have a high amount of nitrogen. Nitrogen is the first number in a sequence of 3 numbers found on the bag. Using anything over 15 is wasteful. Who needs for the grass to grow more than it does on a regular basis? Just look at other manufacturers products and comparison shop. They all cover just about the same weeds.

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There are systems that you can purchase that release product thru the irrigation lines. It can deter the rust build up on sidewalks, driveway, and trees. Otherwise, manual applications work as well. It is something you'd have to do more frequently if you use a hand pump sprayer. There is a product available from Bushel Stop named Snowcap that you can use. I have also heard many neighbors say they are pleased with Rust Magic.

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Oh Boy, spotty grass areas, or yellow grass can be due to any number of reasons. Just like a guy who is losing his hair, that can happen for any number of reasons. If you have treated properly for insects, once and then again in 2 weeks time then it could be a trouble spot. Believe it or not builders often leave debris beneath the sod. Try digging down and seeing if there is something beneath the sod, then remove it. Check your sprinklers and make certain the water is reaching the area. If it is getting wet and the grass is still having trouble knitting in over sparse areas try putting down either compost or mulch. Both will retain moisture and the grass will cover the sparse area more quickly. Fertilize, using a 6-6-6 or an Ironizer in warm weather. Then again if the area is=2 Often too damp as in a low spot and the grass is yellowing could be you will need to use a fungicide. Call me and I'll help diagnose your problem.

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Lumpy? Be afraid, very afraid. Sorry, kidding. I lumpy lawn, or one which has hollow mounds that run in lines, that is from moles, or a mole. There is a liquid you can purchase from garden centers to help eliminate moles. Or you can eliminate their food source by using an insecticide, and they will go elsewhere. Or you can leave them be. They are eating insects which would otherwise be eating your lawn, and at the same time they are aerating the soil.

A spongy feeling is something else entirely. It can happen over a long period of time. What you have is thatch buildup. If you or your lawn service is not using a mulching mower, the grass that is cut builds up over time. To eliminated the spongy feeling, you can contract someone to come in and aerate the turf.

Or you can add sandy soil to the sod and water it in.

Happy Gardening

Joy Schwartz