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## Soil is the Mother of All Things...

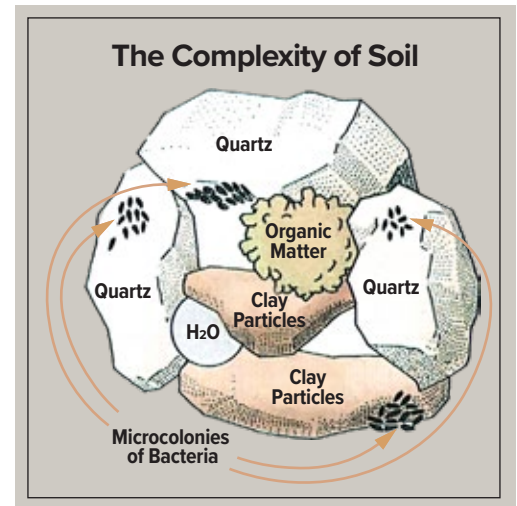
Soil is the foundation of nearly all the important facets of life as we know it in Florida. It is worth protecting. Soils are one of the basic components our lives depend on. Soils have taken thousands of years to form. Unfortunately, it can be easily damaged or almost destroyed by poor management. Soils have important socioeconomic value and produce timber, food, and fiber. They have aesthetic value and support open space; wildlife and bird habitats; recreational areas; and serve as engineering media for construction purposes. They are instrumental in groundwater recharge and are nature's only acceptable waste disposal medium.

### Florida Soil

Florida's State Soil is Myakka Fine Sand, which doesn't occur in any other states. But scientifically speaking it has over 300 different kinds of soil. From hardwood forests in the panhandle to white sandy beaches and swampy marsh – there are a wide variety of ecosystems across the state. Almost all these soils share similar characteristics, like poor drainage and sandy deposits.

Myakka soil is clay-like in texture in some areas and extremely sandy in others. Compared to regular soil, Myakka is more compact, which means grasses and plants have less room to receive nutrients, breathe, and increase.

Properly preparing Florida soil for grass is the first step in ensuring a beautiful lawn. Providing nourishment at the correct times is also important. Getting fertilization right. This can be tough partly because it's difficult for Myakka to hold in the nutrients and moisture.



### The Mixing of Urbanization and Soil

High soil compaction negatively impacts plant establishment, growth, and quality in newly constructed communities. A thorough understanding of these urban soil characteristics is necessary to develop appropriate landscape management plans that maximize plant growth and establishment, while minimizing water use and nutrient runoff. Urban soils are diverse, complex, and affected by numerous human and environmental factors. Urban activities that disturb the soil, such as foot and vehicle traffic, as well as building and roadway construction, result in an increase in bulk density and compaction. As a result, water cannot infiltrate into compacted soil efficiently. After heavy rain, standing water may appear or may run off into surrounding low-lying areas as a result of compacted soil, which can bring on drainage problems.



A soil test provides the means of monitoring the soil so deficiencies, excesses, and imbalances can be avoided.

### Landscaping with LMP

Getting the most out of your landscape requires a different set of rules in Florida, and it's easier to learn than it is to practice Florida's landscaping. LMP Landscape & Irrigation professionals take all necessary steps to increase soil health.

Soil test reports show the pH balance of the soil. Soil that is too acidic or basic will make it hard for many plants and grasses to grow. We test the soil to find out exactly what it needs to thrive and create a customized balance of different nutrients to maintain optimal soil conditions. It takes time, so constituency and patience are key.

# Dethatching the Thatch



Thatch is a matted layer (of roots, stems, blades, runners, and clippings) that forms on top of the soil. You might describe it as a lawn growing into itself rather than the soil. A weaker lawn will be more prone to disease, insects, and winter kill.

There can be a few reasons for thatch forming on some lawns. But the most apparent reason, and what a thatch condition usually indicates, is that your soil is wrong. It is not bioactive or healthy enough to promote the decomposition of dead organic matter. Your soil is not teeming with micro-life: it is “dead” or sterile. Compaction, clay, and poor pH (too acidic or alkaline) will all discourage bioactivity. A lack of earthworms is an indicator of bad soil. You’ll rarely see thatch where earthworms are abundant because, along with being great soil aerators, they are one of nature’s best thatch digesters.

## The Effects of Excessive Thatch

When thatch levels build up over half an inch, it starts to have a negative effect. It can cause the following problems.

### The Grass Becomes Weak and Sparse

Ordinarily, water carries oxygen and nutrients into the soil, where the roots of the grass consume them.

When there is too much thatch, those nutrients can’t penetrate the soil, so the grass is starved of what it needs to produce food and grow.

As a result, it becomes weak and sparse.

Sometimes, the grass will grow roots into the thatch layer so it can consume the water and any nutrients which are held there. This makes the problem even worse.

## An Increased Risk of Drought Damage

The barrier caused by thatch prevents water from penetrating the soil, so it dries out.

As a result, the grass grows roots into it.

During the summer heat, lawn thatch becomes very dry as the moisture evaporates. This ultimately starves the grass of the water it needs to survive.

## Moss and Fungal Disease Start to Spore

Because lawn thatch prevents water from reaching the soil, it lies on the surface and within the fibrous layer when it rains.

During fall and winter, this surface moisture provides the perfect environment in which moss and fungal diseases can spore and spread very quickly.



## LMP’s Approach to Thatch

Lawn thatch occurs naturally in most lawns but if left to build up, it can cause a host of other problems. That said, keeping it in check isn’t difficult to do.



Despite what you may have heard, you can not eliminate actual thatch by raking or other mechanical means. You end up tearing out the lawn. The real solution to thatch, and the best way to prevent it, is to improve your soil, so it is aerated and bioactive enough to get the thatch to decompose.

Applying a Biological Liquid Dethatcher is the key. It has been formulated to generate and accelerate thatch decomposition in lawns. It contains high levels of thatch digesting Bacteria and Enzymes. Along with naturally occurring soil organisms, these will break down thatch and turn it into valuable humus. It is all-natural, non-toxic, and pet-safe. It quickly and easily decomposes thatch layers and grass clippings to return them to the soil, transforming your stunted grass and brown patches into a breathtaking lush green lawn.

# Top-Dressing Turf



Top-dressing turf with a quality compost product has the potential to improve soil quality, nutrient and water-holding capacity, and plant health. Good soil quality allows more robust plant root structure, higher organic matter helps the soil hold onto water and nutrients better, and soil active microbes from the addition of compost may improve the quality and appearance of the grass. A UF-IFAS field study conducted in a local development showed an average increase of soil organic matter of nearly 60% with compost topdressing. Some participants reported a reduced need for irrigation and fertilizer and an approved appearance of their lawns.

Topdressing is usually accompanied by aeration that allows the biologically active soil amendment to work down to the turf's root zone. Watering after the application is a good practice to kick the

microbes into action. Aeration and an application of ½ to ¼" of a fine screened fully composted product can be done by a landscape professional with mechanized equipment or can be done by a homeowner with a bag of compost, a shovel to toss it around, and a leaf rake upside down to get it near the soil.

## There Is Still Time To Prevent Spring Lawn Weeds

Now that March is here, the lawn becomes less of an abstraction and more reality.

The lawnmower is no longer silent, meaninglessly taking up space as the grass awakens from its seasonal stupor. The dormant state has ended, as the days are already slightly longer.

There is still time to prepare for the ideal spring lawn of 2023. The weather is getting warmer, there is plenty to do.

In addition to doing a soil test, as mentioned, an accurate weed assessment is also necessary. Though not green and conquering new territory, some weeds remain with seeds still attached and awaiting distribution.

Two notable culprits are nondescriptly lying dormant, waiting for the return of warm, sunny weather. Purple nut sedge and chamberbitter still have countless nutlets and seeds connected to the parent plant. Purple nutsedge, *Cyperus rotundus*, grows from every possible sunny location with soil. This non-native plant is a rapidly spreading perennial which will take every opportunity to colonize new locations.

The identifier purple is in its name because there is a purple-tinged section of this sedge where it emerges from the ground. The plant is sometimes referred to as purple nut grass because of its long narrow leaves and its erect growth pattern originating from a nutlike basal bulb.

Chamberbitter, *Phyllanthus urinaria*, is an annual that produces great quantities of seed on the underside of its leaf stems. It will handle full sun or partial shade and quickly form clusters of plants, each contributing seed to the soil.

Areas in the lawn identified as having severe infestations should be marked now for treatment in the near future with a pre-emergent herbicide. This type of herbicide prevents the seed from germinating in the spring.



Purple Nutsedge



Chamberbitter

# Property Spotlight: Cypress Creek Town Center



Cypress Creek Town Center is a Super Regional Shopping destination in the dynamic Wesley Chapel growth corridor. The mixed-use Town Center is comprised of more than 150-acres at the intersection of I-75 & State Road 56.

It is a thriving destination for shopping, dining, and leisure! The center strives to provide consumers an easily-accessible plethora of offerings for food, shopping, and leisure.

LMP is proud to maintain much of the Cypress Creek Town Center. It notably has some of the most beautiful zoysia grass in the area!

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When we began the dream of a truly mixed-use town center, we wanted the landscape design and maintenance to bring a residential measure of comfort to the shoppers and visitors of Cypress Creek Town Center. The street scene with its coordinated zoysia turf lines and sidewalks along each roadway creates that sense of home. This pedestrian experience would lose its' charm if the zoysia turf is not perfect and thanks to LMP and their able horticultural staff it looks fantastic 365!

Brent Whitley  
Vice-President of Land Development  
Sierra Properties

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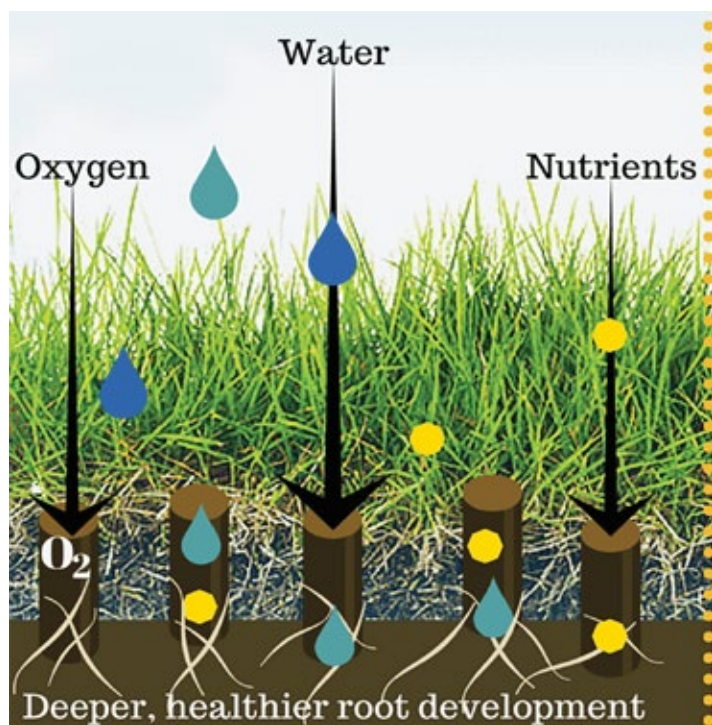
# Why Aerate your Lawn?

The soil under a lawn becomes harder and harder as the years pass. It is rained on, walked on, played on, and mowed regularly. Compaction tightens and restricts the passageways in your soil preventing the roots of your grass to get the nutrients it needs. The aeration process is a great way to improve the effectiveness of irrigation, reduce soil compaction and encourage healthy root development.

## What causes the soil to compact?

Over time, walking, playing, rolling your lawnmower over it, and even rainfall will all play a role in compacting the soil. If the soil gets too compact, the roots become restricted and spell doom for your lawn, and heartier weeds will take over. The healthier your lawn is, the less likely there will be room for weeds to flourish.

For a beautiful, healthy lawn you need to get air, water and nutrients down through thatch and soil and into the root zone. Aeration makes this possible.



## Benefits of Aeration

### Reduced Water Runoff and Puddling

If you find your yard has runoff or puddling problems after a rain, aeration could be the fix you need.

### Aids in Thatch Management

In addition to the deeper roots after aeration, the plugs of soil deposited on top of the ground help decompose thatch. Thatch will only break down in a healthy, properly maintained lawn. Like compost, a thatch layer will only decompose if moist, warm, and aerated.

### Benefits pH Modification

Applying lime or sulphur after core aeration promotes the change of pH deeper into the soil profile.

### Prepares Grass for Dormancy and a Green Spring

Aerating prior to fertilizing will help the nutrients soak in more effectively. Planning for aeration and fertilization in the fall gives enough of a buffer to protect the grass from summer drought stress.

## How Often and When Should a Commercial Lawn be Aerated?

Aeration is recommended annually for most lawns. It is a vital part of your lawn's overall health, especially with compacted soil. Turf grasses such as St. Augustine, Bermuda, and Zoysia are best aerated mid-spring through summer. This allows the turf to grow a dense root system that helps nourish the grass through Florida's long, hot summers.

The longer you go without aerating your lawn the more the soil compacts. If you have traffic on any areas of your lawn, whether it be mowers, people, or pets - the problem only increases.



We take pride in performing high-quality services that yield exceptional results for our customers, and our lawn aeration service is no different.

If you are interested in learning more about Dethatching and Aeration reach out to your Account Manager.

# Alternatives to Turfgrass

A lush lawn can be an appealing element and provides many important benefits, like reducing stormwater runoff and cleaning the air. But sometimes turfgrass doesn't perform as well as you would like.

The desire for an attractive lawn is nothing new. Stemming back to the 1800s, short-cut lawns were a sign of wealth in Europe and gradually made their way to the United States. No longer a status symbol, turfgrass lawns are the norm today and, for years have been the most popular yard coverage in Florida.

But a spacious lawn is not always the practical choice. For the best-looking turfgrass, adequate amounts of water and fertilizer are required. Most homeowners want an appealing landscape, and other options besides turfgrass provide equal beauty. And many of these alternatives don't require difficult maintenance and unnecessary expenses.

Reducing the size of your lawn is one option. Turf in areas with heavy shade and substantial foot traffic can be replaced with alternatives such as shade-tolerant groundcovers or mulch.

Low-growing plants are a popular substitution for turfgrass in selected areas. Popular groundcovers include sunshine mimosa, asiatic jasmine, and perennial peanut. These plants are usually drought tolerant and need minimal fertilizer to keep them looking their best.

Decorative mulched beds can be placed in hard-to-mow and hard-to-grow areas. Common mulch options include pine bark, pine straw, and recycled municipal mulch. When accented with small amounts of turf grass, mulched areas can be pleasing to the eye.

In sunny places where turfgrass would thrive, bahiagrass is a good option. Bahiagrass is drought resistant and may require less pest management.

Some communities have certain lawn care standards, so check your neighborhood's landscaping restrictions before considering one of these options. Decreasing your amount of turfgrass will reduce your lawn care costs, as well as save you time and essential energy.



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