



# the Hedgelines

**In this Issue:**

- A Prepared Community is a Resilient Community - Hurricane Season
- Protecting yourself from Mosquitoes
- Demystifying Smart Irrigation Controllers - Retrofitting your Controller
- Excessive Rain Spells Fungus Problems for Lawns
- Celebrate America - Celebrate Florida
- Homemade Potting Soil

## A Prepared Community is a Resilient Community

The 2023 hurricane season is upon us. In Southwest Florida, however, scores of people are still struggling to overcome the devastation wrought by Hurricane Ian.

Hurricanes are nothing new to Florida. While we may have weathered our share, they still are a force and are very dangerous. A survey conducted by AAA notes that only one in every five Floridians will prepare for the season.

Last year's Hurricane Ian sent 15 feet of storm surge into parts of Florida's west coast, killing 66 people, and in April of this year, a sudden storm dumped 26 inches of rain on causing severe flooding.

For many, Ian and Nicole proved why old habits wouldn't accurately explain how dangerous a storm is to you, your family, and your property. We need to focus on the hazards and risks of a hurricane instead of just the category. Hazards include storm surge warnings, rainfall flooding, and tornadoes.



Forecasters say the 2023 hurricane season may be milder than last year because of a strengthening El Niño. But as Ian showed, it only takes one storm to wreck a community. Hurricane Andrew happened during an El Niño year. An El Niño may reduce the number of hurricanes, but it doesn't stop them from coming. We must prepare as if we're going to be affected because time is the one resource we can't get more of.

### Have you prepared your property for Hurricane Season?

Hurricane prep means you never have enough non-perishable food, water, batteries, solar chargers, duct tape, and trash bags. Hurricane prep requires hoping for the best and planning for the worst. Veteran preppers know they run the chance that weeks of prep and hundreds of dollars later, it'll all be for naught. That's how it goes with hurricane prep. Fuss and fury that ends in a whimper. Except when they don't.

During hurricane season, the right tree in the right place may help protect your property from strong winds by acting as a wind-break, but a poorly maintained tree can do more harm than good.

Improperly pruned trees in advance of a storm face a greater likelihood that they might break or fall during the storm. Many fallen and damaged trees often seen after a storm may be from improper cutting or pruning of trees.

Thinning a tree allows wind to blow through its canopy, offering less wind resistance in a storm. It's also important to note the need to properly prune young trees to create a single leader, so it will grow into a strong trunk. Removing weak branches and reducing limb lengths to mature trees will minimize damage.

### “It's so sad to see them down”...the perils of poorly pruned trees.

Hatracked trees become sails and extreme tree lifting for clearance underneath can cause branch breakage and makes trees top-heavy. Prepare and prune before a storm threatens. If trash pickup doesn't get to your curb before the storm, you've created a pile of potential missiles.

# PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MOSQUITOES & THE DISEASES THEY CARRY



Beyond being a nuisance, they can also spread disease and leave you with itchy bites. Find out how to help keep these tiny vampires away from you and your loved ones.



[1] ANOPHELES – is the primary vector of malaria. [2] AEDES ALBOPICTUS – Asian Tiger Mosquitoes. [3] AEDES AEGYPTI – Yellow Fever Mosquitoes. [4] AEDES TAENIORHYNCHUS – Black Salt Marsh Mosquitoes. [5] CULEX – House Mosquitoes [2 - 5] can all transmit viruses that cause Chikungunya, Dengue, West Nile, and Zika.

JUNE MAY APRIL

- ▶ Miami-Dade County under a mosquito-borne illness advisory following the confirmation of two identified cases of dengue.
- ▶ Polk County officials ask people to take precautions after two horses died from a mosquito-transmitted illness.

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- ▶ Florida DOH released information on the first confirmed local case of malaria in Sarasota County.

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- ▶ An advisory is issued to Orange County residents urging caution as area mosquitos are testing positive for a deadly disease.
- ▶ A health alert was issued for Sarasota and Manatee counties due to two confirmed cases of malaria.
- ▶ Florida Department of Health has issued a statewide mosquito-borne illness advisory following four confirmed local cases of malaria in Sarasota County.

## What Attracts Mosquitoes?

When mosquitoes are looking for a blood meal, they're attracted to perspiration, body heat, and the carbon dioxide given off by your breath. When they're looking for a place to lay their eggs, they're attracted to areas with stagnant water.

## How Mosquitoes Find You

Mosquitoes pick up on a variety of cues to find their victims—from the carbon dioxide you emit when you breathe to the odors you release in your sweat. They use their receptors and vision to zero in on these cues and can spot their next meal from over 150 feet away.

## How Much You Breathe

Mosquitoes are attracted to the carbon dioxide that humans and animals emit with each and every breath. You can't hold your breath to avoid getting bitten, but it's important to note that you emit more carbon dioxide while exercising. So, if you want to avoid those itchy bites, it may help to move your workout indoors at dawn, dusk, and in the early evening when mosquitoes are most active.

## How Much You Sweat

Mosquitoes are attracted to the smell of lactic acid, uric acid, ammonia and other substances your body releases when you sweat—all of which affect your body odor and can make you a more appetizing snack for mosquitoes.

## Common Mosquito Habitats

Tall grass 🌿 Hollow trees 🌿 Under leaves 🌿 Anywhere with standing water  
 Mosquito larvae grow in small water-holding containers including items like plant saucers, buckets, used tires, bottles and cans, bird baths, and the leaf axils of bromeliad plants.

## Add Mosquito-Repelling Plants to your Landscape

There are many plants that have qualities that are natural repellents for mosquitoes. Some plants have overwhelming fragrances, and others contain chemicals that irritate the bugs.

- Citronella 🌿 Bee balm 🌿 Lavender 🌿 American beautyberry 🌿 Catnip 🌿 Marigolds 🌿 Eucalyptus 🌿 Peppermint

# Excessive Rain Spells Fungus Problem for Lawns



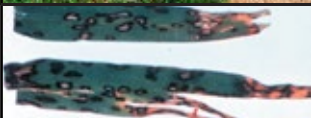








Constant summer rains encourage fungus disease development in lawns and landscape plants. While fungicide applications help, they are no substitute for favorable growing conditions.

Foliar diseases occur on most species of landscape trees, shrubs, and turf. Most fungal diseases depend on moisture, mainly foliage or leaf spot diseases. Many of these disease-causing fungi are spread by microscopic airborne spores that require moisture to germinate, infect and colonize our plants. Most fungal leaf spot diseases require a 12- to 14-hour period of uninterrupted wetness.

The spores of most fungi that infect leaves need only a film of liquid water on the leaf to sprout and cause an infection. The more leaves stay dry, the fewer fungal infections can occur.

Wet soil conditions also encourage water molds, such as Phytophthora, Pythium, and Rhizoctonia, to attack the roots or crowns of plants and cause rot. Affected plants may exhibit wilting (even though the soil is moist), scorched or brown leaves, leaf drop, dieback, or even death. Once infection occurs, little can be done to help a plant.

Diseases may not be apparent right now, but once the rains begin to subside and temperatures remain in the 90s, keep your eye out for plant diseases. Wilting, leaf spots, or dieback may all be symptoms of disease problems.

Fungus that Love Wet Grass	Host	Symptoms
	<b>Anthracnose</b> All Warm Season Grasses	Reddish-brown spots surrounded by a yellow halo.
	<b>Brown Patch</b> St. Augustine & Zoysia	Infects leaf area closest to the soil. Dark rot at leaf base. Entire leaf will pull out easily. Roots are not affected.
	<b>Cercospora Leaf Spot</b> St. Augustine	Initial symptoms are narrow, dark brown leaf spots. Over time, these spots enlarge into oblong to irregularly shaped lesions with dark tan centers and dark brown to purple margins.
	<b>Dollar Spot</b> All Warm Season Grasses	Small straw-colored patches. Irregular white lesions w/ distinct brown borders on the leaves at the outside edge of the patch. White cottony mycelia in early morning dew.
	<b>Gray Leaf Spot</b> St. Augustine & Bermuda	Olive green to brown spots enlarge to form oblong spots that are tan with distinctive dark-brown margins. May appear velvety gray with spore production.
	<b>Helminthosporium Leaf Spot</b> All Warm Season Grasses	Spots range from very small, solid brown to purple lesions to expanded lesions with bleached centers that girdle the leaf blade
	<b>Large Patch</b> All Warm Season Grasses	Circular patches of dis-eased turf. Turf at the periphery of the patch may appear orange. Folia dieback from the leaf tip toward the base.
	<b>Leaf Blight</b> St. Augustine	Browning or graying leaf blades randomly scattered throughout otherwise healthy grass.
	<b>Pythium Root Rot</b> All Warm Season Grasses	Leaf decline. Thinning. Roots are discolored and easily removed.
	<b>Rust</b> St. Augustine & Zoysia	Initially, light yellow flecks appear on the leaves. If the disease progresses, these flecks enlarge into spots that are parallel to the leaf vein.
	<b>Take-All Root Rot</b> All Warm Season Grasses	This is a root rot disease. The fungus does not attack leaves.



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# Demystifying Smart Irrigation Controllers

**A smart controller doesn't have to be a full commitment to get results; you can see results by updating your irrigation system with a retrofit.**

In the past, the main reason to upgrade an irrigation system was when it was broken and not functioning. Today, that is not always the case. Smart irrigation controllers use real-time weather data to control irrigation systems. As water restrictions increase across the country, a smart irrigation controller can make the difference between a staggering utilities bill and a healthy landscape. But as technology continues to advance, the options can feel complicated.

Below are sprinkler system retrofit options that save water and improve the overall performance of sprinkler systems.

## High-Efficiency Nozzles

High-efficiency nozzles are one of the best improvements you can make to your existing system to improve and reduce your water usage. These low precipitation rate nozzles apply water at roughly  $\frac{1}{3}$  the rate of a traditional spray nozzle. This slower application rate means more water ends up in the soil instead of running off down the street.

## Pressure Regulated Spray Heads

Too much pressure causes sprinklers to "mist," which results in your water blowing away with any amount of wind. A pressure-regulated head allows you to keep full pressure on every zone but regulate the pressure right at each head! This results in much more of your water staying on your lawn.

## Master Valve Installs

A master valve controls water flow into the mainline piping system and valve manifolds. It is designed to come on before any subsequent zone valves are scheduled to turn on. The master valve will prevent accidental water waste in the event of a damaged or stuck-open zone valve.

## Flow Meters

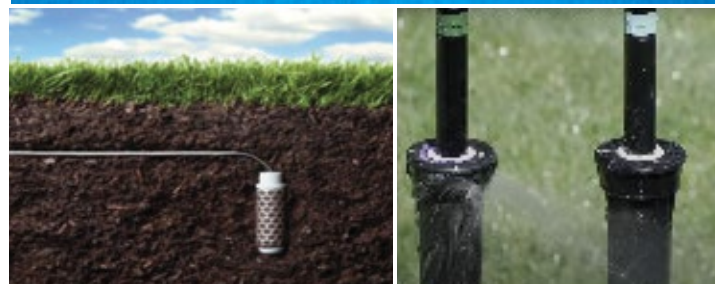
Avoid catastrophic leaks and monitor outdoor water use with a sprinkler system flow meter. Installed at the source of your sprinkler supply (usually after backflow preventer), a flow meter can monitor your precise irrigation water usage, provide leak detection and water usage reports.

## Rain Sensors

A rain-sensor can tell your sprinkler system controller to shut off and prevent sprinklers from running in the rain. The rain-sensor can be mounted on any flat vertical surface or rain gutter. Rain sensors are not compatible with all controllers but are a good option if you're not ready to upgrade to a smart controller.

## Drip Irrigation

Drip irrigation eliminates many of the issues associated with overhead watering, such as over-spraying, wind, and evaporation. It also allows water to be delivered directly to the root zone, which avoids watering areas where plants are not.



**There have been many changes in irrigation products over the years. However, each and every property is unique and will have its own needs and requirements. Additionally, we understand budgets and can work with you to find the best approach for you.**

# Homemade Potting Soil

It's satisfying to make your own to give your plants a healthy start. Whether you're starting seeds, root cuttings, potting up houseplants, or growing patio containers and hanging baskets, potting soil is the ideal growing medium for containerized plants.

Good potting soil is lighter and fluffier than ground soil, allowing enough air and water for the roots for healthy root growth and providing enough anchorage for roots.



## POTTING SOIL RECIPES

### FOLIAGE PLANTS

2 parts peat  
1 part perlite or bark  
1 part coarse sand

### SUCCULENTS

2 parts soil  
1 part peat moss  
1 part perlite  
1 part coarse sand

### SOIL-BASED MIX

*[heavier than peat-based mixes but it has good drainage]*

1/3 compost  
1/3 topsoil  
1/3 sand, perlite, or vermiculite

**Coarse Sand:** Sand adds air space to a potting mix. Builder's sand, or coarse sand, is best. Avoid fine sand; it creates a dense mix. Adding sand is also good choice for top-heavy plants that might tip over.

**Compost:** Compost is cheaper than traditional ingredients, holds water well, provides nutrients, and can be produced at home. The nutrient quality of compost will depend on the quality of the materials that were composted.

**Pine Bark:** Pine bark creates a light potting mix with air space but low water holding capability. It degrades slowly and is a good component for mixes for potted ornamentals. If the pine bark is ground fine enough, it may be partially substituted for peat moss. Make sure that it has gone through the aging process before use.

**Coir Fiber:** A by-product of the coconut industry, coir looks and acts a lot like sphagnum peat moss in both commercial and DIY potting soil blends. It has more nutrients than peat moss and lasts even longer, but it's more expensive to purchase. Coir fiber's pH is close to neutral. Often sold in compressed bricks, coir fiber is considered by many to be more sustainable than sphagnum peat moss.

**Sphagnum Moss & Peat:** Peat moss is the most common ingredient for soilless mixes because it is widely available and inexpensive. Peat moss decomposes slowly and holds large amounts of water; however, it has a high acidity. Lime is usually added to mixes to balance the pH.

**Perlite:** Perlite is a sterile and pH-neutral lightweight volcanic rock. It increases air space, improves water drainage, and is a good lightweight replacement for sand.

**Vermiculite:** Vermiculite is another lightweight addition to potting mixes. Handle it gently; if it's handled roughly, it compacts and loses its air-holding ability. Medium grade is suitable for seedlings, while coarse grade is better for a soil mix for older plants.

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