



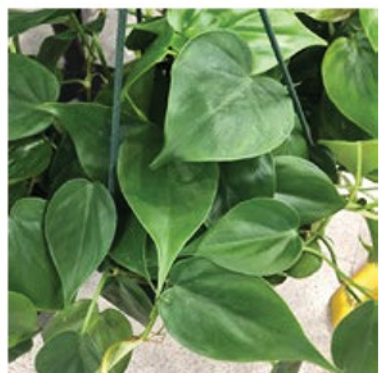
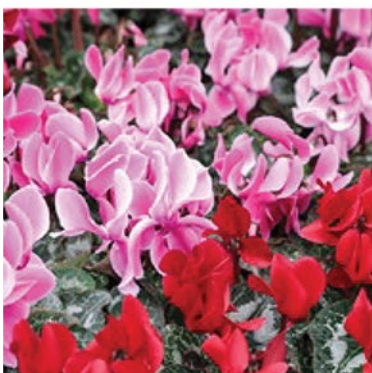
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♥♥♥ **The Month of Love** ♥♥♥

Plants that evoke and symbolize love through their names or shapes. 6 Heart Shaped Plants for your Valentine Heart Bleeding Heart<sub>1</sub>, Heart Leaf Foam Flower<sub>2</sub>, String of Hearts<sub>3</sub>, Heart-Leaf Philodendron<sub>12</sub>, Caladiums<sub>6</sub>, and Anthurium<sub>7</sub>. Orchids symbolize love, beauty, luxury, and strength. Red Roses<sub>4</sub> symbolize love, romance, beauty, and perfection. Passion Flower<sub>5</sub>; Despite its strictly religious origin, the name passion flower remains very evocative, and thus, it has become the symbol of passionate love. Cyclamen<sub>9</sub> signify empathy and devotion. Jade Plant<sub>10</sub> a symbol of eternity and love that will last forever. Forget-Me-Nots<sub>11</sub> symbolize true love and respect for the person you care about the most.

Valentine's Day is a popular time for cut flowers... this year, consider a flowering plant instead! The cut flowers begin their journey towards death. With a plant, the gift is just the beginning!





# Monitoring Your Property for Landscaping Distress

When a property is well taken care of, people don't often try to tell you how impressed they are. But when a branch falls across a walkway, a tree looks sickly, or a light bulb is busted, tenants and residents quickly let you know. And if the entire property looks rundown? Let's just say you'll hear about it.

Without proper maintenance and updating, properties begin to look—and feel—tired. Just by driving into the parking lot, visitors can tell something's not right. But more importantly, they might not be inclined to return after leaving.

## Key Areas to Monitor for Landscaping Distress

Start with the obvious. Check for debris, especially in early spring, when dead foliage might look like the expected fallout from winter.

The ground can become compacted from foot traffic and equipment use and a layer of thatch can form. When your turf's roots can't breathe, it shows. Weeds take over where grass struggles. Grass that used to be green turns brown. Pests and disease pounce. Aeration can help to break up that layer and loosen the soil, allowing it to breathe.

Plantings and lawns develop 'holes' over time. Sometimes, these holes are hard to see, especially before and during early-growth periods, so take a top-down view. These holes are not only unsightly, but a liability risk.

Refreshed mulch not only increases your curb appeal, but it also ensures that the plants in your landscape beds are getting the greatest amount of benefits from your mulch such as moisture retention and weed prevention. They increase soil organic matter, the diversity and functionality of the soil food web (particularly saprophytic fungi), support mycorrhizal partners of woody plants, supply nutrients and suppress weeds. Thick mulch layers increase root development, and help to suppress soil borne plant pathogens. The breakdown of woody mulches on the soil surface encourages development of soil structure, increased water infiltration, water holding capacity, and nutrient holding capacity of underlying soil layers. Well mulched trees and shrubs grow healthfully without fertilization.

Ornamental trees often grow tall and scraggly. Plus, nearby offspring can shoot up overnight, which makes even a well-groomed lawn appear wild. Suckers also look sloppy and need to be removed.

Shrubs are critical for defining areas of your property, but they can only do that if they are well-defined. Be generous with your pruning; your shrubs don't need to dominate an area, and for most varieties, new growth comes in quickly.

It's advisable to objectively measure how 'fresh' your property's landscaping is. These next couple of months are good times to assess the grounds and fix problems before the season kicks into high gear.

Schedule an afternoon with your Account Manager to walk your property to help assess.



# It's Nesting Time for Northern Cardinals

Nest-building begins as early as February for northern cardinals because their breeding season kicks off in March and early April. (The season ends in late August.) It takes from three to nine days for cardinals to build a nest. The majority of nest-building happens between 7:30 and 11:30 a.m., but later in the season, nest-building hours might happen later in the day.

Northern cardinals construct their nests in the fork of a branch, 1 to 15 feet off the ground. Nest sites are hidden amongst the dense foliage of trees, shrubs, or tangled vines to offer protection from predators and the elements. This species does not reuse previous years' nests. Mated pairs choose a new nest site within their range and rebuild year after year.

Cardinals have a long nesting season in Florida, likely due to the state's mild winters. Females will lay their eggs any time between February and September. A nesting pair generally has two to four broods per season. The average clutch is three eggs, buffy greenish-white with medium brown spots. The eggs hatch in 11 to 13 days, and the young birds fledge in 9 to 10 days.

Cardinals sing more than 24 songs, and both males and females sing! For most songbirds, it's just the male. Even more surprising is the way that Cardinal couples sing as a pair to each other as they are very close partners and parents. The cardinal's duets seem to strengthen their bonds. The female sings from the nest while incubating eggs and communicates to the male when to bring food to her nest; the male will sing during courtship but also signal a predator to the female when she's in the nest.



## How do you attract Cardinals to your backyard?

Cardinals will frequent backyard bird feeders in Florida year round. The best way to attract these birds and keep them returning is to offer the food sources, and habitat features they like.

First, cardinals are typically ground feeders, so offering seeds directly on the ground or a low platform feeder is preferable. Once you have found the perfect setup, fill your feeders with their favorite seeds - sunflower, safflower, and suet.

Additionally, cardinals feel safest with some overhead protection from vegetation. To provide this, place your feeder on a low branch within dense foliage, offering protection from above. Cardinals are typically the first bird to visit feeders in the morning and the last to visit in the evenings.

An ideal bird feeder is one of the most important things you need to attract cardinals. Like many other birds, cardinals cannot change their direction quickly, so the bird feeders will need a large platform upon which the cardinals can land easily. Square, open platform feeders are ideal as well. They want to feel protected while eating, so it is best to place the bird feeder about 5-6 feet above the ground and near trees or shrubs. Cardinals are also ground feeders and will appreciate food left below the bird feeder.

# Property Spotlight: Willowbend Osprey



Willowbend is a deed-restricted maintained community of 275 homes in Southern Sarasota County. The community's Southern edge abuts the natural beauty of Oscar Scherer State Park. In conjunction with this, only Florida-friendly vegetation is permitted in the community. Our residents take pride and interest in maintaining this natural physical beauty throughout the area. Landscape Maintenance Professionals and their staff provide maintenance of Willowbend. The LMP staff works closely with the Willowbend Landscape Committee by attending weekly meetings, advising on improvement projects, weed & pest control, mowing, trimming, and irrigation requirements. When necessary, LMP staff meet with residents at their homes to review individual concerns and are available for presentations at Board meetings. This compatible working relationship has helped Willowbend remain one of the most desirable communities in Sarasota County.



# Pruning Plants with Purpose

February represents the perfect time for some "winter" pruning in Central and South Florida. This is when your garden and landscape is at its most dormant period.

February qualifies as late winter, and the good news is that you don't need to rush out during the Super Bowl to get this done. You can spend the time devising a plan. The key is getting this done before new growth can begin with the coming of March. After all, nothing is much worse in landscaping than trying to prune lush and youthful growth off of a plant in the spring season.

## LATE WINTER IS THE IDEAL TIME FOR TREE & SHRUB PRUNING

Properly pruning trees is a landscape practice that enhances your trees' and shrubs' overall health and aesthetic. During the wintertime, most plants remain dormant. The good news is that many diseases and insects that could invade pruning cuts remain dormant.

Once the leaves fall off of plants, it is easy to see their overall form and structure. You can additionally pinpoint damaged or diseased branches far more efficiently without foliage obscuring your view. Pruning trees during late winter may also leave them with extra root and energy reserves. This enables them to heal wounds while supporting vigorous spring growth quickly.

Nevertheless, if observing springtime flowers, you may want to consider waiting to prune these plants a short time after blooming. Pruning trees before the end of winter will never adversely affect their health. However, it can reduce these blooms when spring arrives.

## WHY DO YOUR TREES NEED PRUNING?

The most common reason many homeowners prune their plants is size reduction and maintenance. Other causes may include removing dead, damaged, or diseased branches and increasing the plant's flowers or fruit.

Most people will utilize two basic techniques when pruning trees: thinning and heading back. Thinning involves returning entire branches to the main trunk's next branch. When making thinning cuts, ensure that you don't cut very near the trunk, or you may slow down the overall healing process. This also increases infection risks.

Heading back involves shortening the length of the branch back to a bud or the next side branch. Don't leave stubs behind; they can later invite pests and diseases to move in and attack healthy material.

Nevertheless, normal pruning means simply cutting a plant back by about 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. When you need more drastic downsizing, the intelligent move cuts back by this length in February before doing the rest the following winter.

This is helpful when cutting it back to the desired point, which may make the plant look bare. However, even drastic pruning will not kill a plant. You must wait longer for it to return to its best appearance.



# A Palms Yellowing Fronds

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The sheer impulse to shear those yellowing palm fronds is strong, but it's best to abort the impulse! Florida can have beautiful palms, but most palms are extremely over-pruned and lack nutrients.

Removal of living fronds can often result in weak, narrowed growth of the trunk (sometimes known as "pencil-pointing"). This narrow growth point is more susceptible to breakage in high winds. Removing too many fronds may also increase a palm's vulnerability to cold damage.

## **Provide proper palm fertilizer.**

Palms in Florida can lack many nutrients, and the symptoms show up in the fronds. When the lower, older fronds are not evenly green, it is because they are lacking nutrients. Removing green or yellow leaves can cause severe nutrient deficiencies or worsen existing issues. This is very stressful to the palm, and the longer the deficiency goes uncorrected, the more difficult it will be to fix.

UF IFAS recommends the following: Fertilize palms three times a year (February, May, and November) with an 8-0-12-4Mg fertilizer that has all the micronutrients in the sulfate form. Use this fertilizer for the entire landscape within 50 feet of the palm, including grass. In August, apply 0-0-16-6Mg fertilizer. For more information, see <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep261>. If you can't use the right fertilizer, don't fertilize or prune. Turf fertilizers can kill palms.

## **Palms need their fronds for shelter.**

The fronds help protect the growing buds of the palm, and they help support and guard the fronds above them. Removing too many fronds leaves the bud exposed to cold and wind. The so-called "hurricane cut" is wrong and harmful to the palm.

While yellowing leaves may not look appealing, addressing a palm's nutrient deficiency is essential rather than trying to "prune away the problem." Just be patient and let your palms do their thing. Repeated over-pruning can harm them, potentially causing removal and replacement costs. Leave the green and yellow fronds alone and watch your palms repay you with years of breathtaking tropical beauty.



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