

Landscape Topics

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Fall Landscape Activities

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Does your landscape business slow down in the fall? Look for services to offer your customers and ways to more profitably use your time! Fall and winter is a good time to ...

Plant or move woody trees, shrubs, and many perennials. Late fall and winter is generally the best time to plant these plants. Reserve most pruning until after the first of the year. On spring-blooming plants, begin pruning again after bloom. Dead plant material can be pruned at any time.

Soil sample to look for low pH or fertility problems. This is especially important with St. Augustine, Bermuda, fescue and zoysia lawns. This is a good time to apply lime so that the winter rains can wash it into the soil. For more information see <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/C896.htm>

Conduct a sprinkler performance test. Look for leaks, controller problems, blocked heads etc. Put a grid of cups across the lawn and run the system through one cycle. Is the amount of water in each cup about the same? If not, water distribution is uneven which may mean there is a problem. Look for problems and fix them. This can really help to conserve water, improve landscape health and save money for your clients.

Re-set sprinkler systems so they run less often. Typically once a week should be plenty in the fall. Apply three-quarter to one inch of water every time you irrigate. Wait until the soil dries to water again. Once the winter rains begin, we can probably turn the systems off for the winter. In some areas you will need to drain the sprinkler system so it will not freeze this winter.

Offer a special on irrigation installation in the off-season.

Keep the leaves raked up. This will prevent leaf matting during rains which can smother the grass. Leaves can make an excellent mulch for natural areas. Resist the urge to remove leaves from under the canopy of trees. Mulched areas under trees improve root growth and tree health. Mulched areas typically look better if they have well-defined bed lines. Help your customer with establishing these beds.

Check trees and identify hazards that need to be dealt with. Trees are easier to evaluate for hazards when they have no leaves. Let a certified arborist handle tree issues since tree work is hazardous. Working on trees without the proper training and equipment can open your company to large safety and liability problems. To find a certified arborist go to <http://www.isa-arbor.com/findArborist/findarborist.aspx>

Conduct needed maintenance on your equipment. You may be surprised how much better a sharp mower blade cuts a lawn. Winterize equipment that you will not be using this winter.

Train your staff using information from UGA Extension. Consider using the UGA Extension *Super Crew* video series (www.caes.uga.edu/departments/hort/extension/programs/supercrew.html) or information from our website. We have publications you can read, online learning video clips and other information. Find us at www.gaurbanag.org

Check mulched beds and add mulch if needed. Mulch beds to prevent weeds by applying a mulch 2 to 4 inches thick. Coarse textured mulches (pine bark, nuggets, wood chips) are better applied more deeply (3 to 4

inches deep) while fine-textured mulches (pine straw, etc.) are better applied 2 to 3 inches deep. Do not pile mulch around the base of trees or shrubs. Mulch piles around the base of trees can make the tree susceptible to pests.

Other services you may consider offering at this time include installation of walks and other hardscapes, hanging Christmas lights or setting up other holiday décor, landscape design and landscape consultations. Perhaps you can re-design landscapes so they use less water in the summer (See <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubcd/B1073.htm>). These services often require specialized training so make sure you have adequate training and competent employees before beginning. If you need training, this is a good time to get it!

These are valuable services you can offer your clients and may be a way of helping you retain workers and business during this slower time of the year.