

## Problems Raining Down on Your Landscape

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After months of being in a drought, the rain was a blessing. The rain greened up our lawns, brought an abundant number of flowers, and attracted wildlife like birds and butterflies, although too much of a good thing can cause problems. See what you need to look for and how you can prevent problems.

Typically, June and July tend to be our rainiest months. We have an average rainfall of 52 inches throughout the year and most of that is during the summer months.

With wet landscapes, several issues can arise, some within your control. First, if you have an irrigation system, make sure you have a rain sensor and one that works. The rain sensor turns off the irrigation for that cycle once it receives enough rain, so it doesn't water the lawn when it is already saturated. It makes me grit my teeth when I see a person's or business's irrigation on while it is raining. You can also do what I did and just turn it off completely until everything dries out.

Next, since this is the turf season, many people like to follow a schedule for fertilizing their lawn. Although fertilizer is often needed for grasses such as St. Augustine grass and zoysiagrass to keep them healthier, during the rainy season is not the best time to apply them. The fertilizer is likely to go past the root zone and into the aquifer or run off into the storm drain if it is applied to saturated soil or before a storm. The grass is getting some natural nitrogen from the rain so be content with that and hold off.

All the rain may stress the turf and cause take-all root rot to occur. This fungus naturally occurs on the roots, but is mainly a problem with prolonged periods of rain or when the lawn is stressed. It appears as irregular yellow or light-green patches and the grass will thin and die. A fertilizer won't fix this since the damage is already done, so it is best to try to keep your turf healthy by avoiding overwatering (the rain can't be helped) and fertilizing too much or too often.

You may also see certain weeds pop up like dollarweed and sedges which like the extra moisture. If you can tolerate the weeds or remove them mechanically, that is the best way to handle them during the rainy season. You can also think ahead and apply a pre-emergent herbicide in February and September to control them before they emerge.

When it is raining, it is a good time to see if you have any issues with the flow of the stormwater. Are your storm drains directed at the driveway? If so, direct them more to the plants and turf, so that it can be filtered before entering the storm drain.

If you are on a slope, do you have a river running through your landscape each time it rains? If so, you may want to think about installing a rain garden to hold onto the water while beautifying the area. You can find more about rain gardens here, <http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/design/types-of-gardens/rain-gardens.html>. A rain barrel can also redirect your stormwater while holding onto some for times of drought.

Unlike plants for rain gardens, some plants don't like wet feet and may show signs of stress with all the rain. The tips can turn brown and root rots can develop. If you have a plant that needs well-drained soil, plant it appropriately and avoid planting it under an eave of the house where rain may collect.

Lastly, mosquitoes love the rain, so empty containers out often so that mosquitoes are unable to breed in them. The mosquitoes that breed in containers are often the same species that can carry diseases. It can take less than a week to go from egg to adult during these warmer months. My husband overturns the trash cans (and lids) that he places yard waste in throughout the summer to keep from mosquitoes building up. He knows that I'm a target for every mosquito in the neighborhood.

Enjoy your afternoon naps and summer movie watching during the rains and with just a few precautions, you can rejuvenate your landscape in the process.