

Rain provides benefits, challenges when landscaping

Rainy season. You either love it or hate it, depending on the circumstances. If it messes up your tee time on a course you really wanted to play with good friends, it's a bummer.

On the other hand, if it has been dry and you are the superintendent in charge of making sure the turf on that course stays healthy and looking green and keeping all those divots filled in, it can be a very welcomed thing.

So far, this year seems to be a little heavier on the messed up tee times, but I'm not complaining.

Tee times are not the only thing these frequent rains affect in an area as large as The Villages. When it comes to the amount of landscaped common areas the District maintains, frequent rains are both a blessing and a bane.

It is a blessing because irrigation coverage and quality from Mother Nature is better for most plants than what we get from the average irrigation system, as long as we don't get too much at one time.

It also saves on the cost of irrigation water and lowers our electric bills to run the pumps that supply the irrigation water. Not to mention, the rain greatly reduces what we have to pump out of the wells.

With that being said, the daily rains affect our maintenance contractors in many ways. Frequent rains make the grass grow taller than normal each week and if it is still wet when it gets mowed, the grass clippings can stick together and leave clumps. These clumps often are unsightly and, under



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some conditions, can lead to other problems such as turf fungus.

The wet conditions also can limit access by the maintenance contractors to some areas or cause ruts to be left in the turf by their equipment.

Additionally, rain days can cause the contractors to get behind on their maintenance activities, and weeds become harder to manage if the weed control chemicals get washed off before they have been on the plants long enough to take effect.

Even with all of the challenges caused by the rain, the District will continue to ensure that the community is maintained to the highest level.

At this time, we are roughly halfway through one of the largest communitywide activities related to landscape, which is the mulching of all the common area beds with pine straw. This activity happens twice a year, starting in January and then roughly around the beginning of July.

Proper mulching can reduce the number of weed problems and will help the plant beds retain moisture, stabilize the soil and help provide insulation to assist in keeping plant roots from getting too hot or cold due to temperature extremes.

Our mulch contractor installs approximately 140,000

bales of pine straw per application to the District maintained areas. These areas include recreation centers, cul-de-sacs, villa frontages and entries, parks, retention basins, the three town squares and major roadways.

Each semi-trailer averages around 1,400 bales, which is roughly 100 trailers of pine straw to work with. The logistics to schedule these to be delivered and picked up are incredible.

Obviously the mulch contractor cannot park a semi-trailer full of bales on the turf along a roadway, so they must use smaller multipurpose carts to transport bales and pull smaller trailers to deliver to the crews.

In order to access all areas to be mulched, it sometimes is necessary that these carts with trailers utilize the multimodal paths and roadways. I would like to remind everyone to please use caution while the contractors perform this service.

Speaking of multimodal paths, in a community of approximately 100,000 residents, golf cart safety is imperative on the multimodal paths and roadways.

The District has several educational materials available to residents and guests, including a video, that can be found at districtgov.org or by visiting the Customer Service Center at 984 Old Mill Run.

I'll see you next time, here at Our Place.

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