

Rain makes landscaping tasks a little more challenging

As the landscape manager for the Village Community Development Districts for more than 13 years, I have a good understanding of how weather plays an important part in certain tasks getting done when we anticipate they should.

When I first started working in The Villages in 2002, this area was still in the midst of a drought. It had started a couple years before I moved up from Naples and lasted for a while after I started working here.

I saw areas of landscape plantings that were weak or dying, and there were some areas where some types of plants already had been removed. Roadside ditches in this area that typically were full of water, aquatic life and vegetation were mostly dry and devoid of green growing things.

Over the next few years, the rainy seasons resumed to normal, but they still were not what I was used to growing up in north Florida. I remember between mid-June and September you almost could set your watch to the daily 3:30 p.m. rains coming in off the Gulf.

Beginning with my senior year in high school and all through college, I worked for a large aquatic plant nursery in north Florida that specialized in importing, growing and picking wild aquatic plants. The company was a supplier for large pet store chains that sold the plants for use as water features or to place in aquariums with tropical fish.

I have slogged more miles than I care to remember in north and central Florida roadside ditches and ponds, wearing hip-boots or chest waders, collecting dozens of varieties



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of native and exotic aquatic plants. And yes, I had run-ins with alligators, wild hogs, assorted snakes, stinging insects and various other critters along the way.

This experience provided me with a unique perspective on what the “normal” hydrology should be for this part of the state during the rainy season.

Here we are in the middle of the rainy season, and so far it is living up to the description; however, the rains seem to start at any time of the day instead of waiting until the afternoon.

According to our rainfall measuring systems, in July we experienced anywhere from 10 inches to more than 13 inches of rain in areas we monitor between County Road 466 and State Road 44 at Brownwood. I live in Oxford, and I had more than 17 inches at my house. According to the website I looked at for average July rainfall for Ocala, 6.93 inches is the normal amount.

When we get two or three times that amount of rainfall in a month, it causes problems with normal landscape maintenance activities, high water levels and saturated soils. Maintenance workers have to mow the turf, pull weeds and trim the shrubs when they can instead of when they need to.

When they get a chance to mow, it often leads to tracks

in the turf or excess clippings on top after mowing because it was too wet to mow on their normal day and they had to mow the grass when it was much taller than normal.

When you add to the equation that we are in the middle of hurricane season and we must run irrigation on areas of the golf courses or road right-of-ways to lower retention ponds that are above design high level, it just adds to the problem.

We are currently in the middle of having our twice yearly application of pine straw installed in the landscape areas throughout the community. The rainfall also has an effect on these crews that must work outside in whatever weather to complete the installation of more than 160,000 bales in the time frame we provide.

The contractors often use smaller multipurpose carts to transport bales of pine straw and pull smaller trailers to deliver to the crews. In order to access all areas for application, it sometimes is necessary for the contractors to utilize the multimodal paths and roadways.

I would like to remind everyone to please use caution and adhere to all signage while the contractors perform this service. They provide a valuable service to all of us and often have to complete it under less than favorable weather conditions.

That’s all I have for this time, but I’ll see you again here, at Our Place.

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