



Smith Grounds Management –Enhancing your image

# SGM Newsletter

Spring 2014

## Green Landscaping Best Practices

Compiled by FacilitiesNet Staff

Today's grounds care managers have more opportunities than ever to save energy, decrease water use and maximize resources, while creating eco-friendly and aesthetically pleasing environments. But achieving these goals will require managers to look at both the products and practices their grounds care department use.

Achieving healthy soil and following green landscaping practices often means reducing the amount of chemical applications.

"It would be easy to put down chemicals that kill weeds, but what I'm trying to do is build soil that is conducive to growing the grass and plants I want to grow," says Jeffrey Weiser, grounds manager with Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.

"The chemical will kill the weed, but it won't really solve the problem," adds Kevin O'Donnell, superintendent of grounds with Villanova University. "A better strategy might be to look at factors associated with a particular weed, such as compacted soil, and solve that problem."

The use of synthetic pesticides also is a concern of several municipalities throughout the United States and Canada. Several communities have set up reduction strategies to help promote green landscaping, while others have completely banned products.

States and communities also are regulating lawn fertilizers more heavily. Restrictions apply to fertilizers containing phosphorous — and in some areas, high levels of soluble nitrogen — to protect water supplies from damaging nutrient pollutants.

One green landscaping practice catching national attention involves topdressing lawns with compost. Compost often is unregulated and untested, and some composts might not be suitable for certain lawns. Pesticide residues and heavy metals found in some compost create concerns for and users.

### Focus on Water

Some organizations have taken major steps to curtail water use in response to shortages, rising prices and the call for green landscaping practices. Landscaped areas have come under particular scrutiny in the search for savings on water use.

Water-conservation efforts might include shutting down irrigation systems during months with more rainfall, incorporating drip irrigation and pressure reducers on systems to lower water volume, and adding composted materials to soil to retain moisture. Some managers have installed irrigation systems that monitor rainfall.

Managers also should monitor water leaving the grounds. Runoff can cause problems downstream, such as chemical pollution, and negatively impact the surrounding community.

### Sources:

[Green: The Driving Issue on Grounds by Cathy Walker](#)  
[Greening the Grounds by Renee Gryzlewicz](#)



## Fire Ants Can Be A Pain

By working all year long, TopChoice affects the Fire ants at their most active season when the temperature is cool and when the ground is moist. Page #2



## SGM Grand Award Recipient

The Smith Grounds Management team was recognized by The Professional Landcare Network Page #2



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## Fire Ants Can Be A Pain

Fire ants, which currently infest more than 325 million acres across the southern U.S., pose a serious and growing public health threat – injuring more than 20 million people each year with their stings. A full-blown colony of fire ants can number up to 500,000 members. Just one colony can have multiple queens capable of laying 1,500 eggs each, per day. When disturbed, hundreds, sometimes thousands of ants, will attack an intruder, inflicting painful stings that, in the most severe cases, can be life threatening. Studies show that 10 to 15 percent of those stung by fire ants experience severe localized allergic reactions, with one to two percent experiencing dangerous systemic reactions that, in rare cases, result in death.

Fire ants are quickly becoming a serious problem in central and south-eastern parts of North Carolina. Invasive and aggressive, their venomous sting is dangerous to people and pets. Smith Grounds Management staff are certified by Bayer Environmental Science to apply Top Choice, a cutting-edge fire ant control. In a single application we can protect your property for an entire year.

Fire ants are most active when the temperature is cool and when the ground is moist. In hot, dry weather applications made to turf will be "warehoused" until the ants begin to actively build mounds and forage on the surface. Irrigation or rainfall will bring ants to the surface where they will come into contact with the active ingredient.

TopChoice kills existing colonies of fire ants and prevents new colonies from establishing for up to one year. After its initial release into the soil profile, TopChoice binds tightly to the soil creating a lasting barrier that's not affected by heavy rainfall. Because it acts gradually, TopChoice kills foraging workers, but not before they carry the insecticide back to the colony and spread it to the queens and other ants.

TopChoice is a low-dose, non-bait granular insecticide that requires just one annual application by a licensed professional. It provides unsurpassed control of fire ants for up to one year, virtually eliminating existing mounds and preventing new mounds from forming. Because of its selective effects, there are no concerns about people or pets when TopChoice is applied by a professional.



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## SGM Spring Services Schedule

- ✓ Irrigation start up will be begin April 1<sup>st</sup>
- ✓ Broadleaf control will be scheduled Mid April
- ✓ Second round of pre emergent fertilizer we be applied in April
- ✓ For best results, schedule Fire Ant control in early spring
- ✓ First round of pruning will be begin in May
- ✓ Summer annuals will be installed late April beginning of May



## Grand Award Recipient

The PLANET awards program offers PLANET members an opportunity to earn respect from the industry and gain a sense of pride for their accomplishments. Award winners garner prestige from their industry peers and become more well-known in the industry and in their communities.

Smith Grounds Management received a Grand Award for excellence in Exterior Landscape Maintenance for their maintenance program at the Charlotte, NC TIAA-CREF facility in 2012.

View all of the 2012 award honoree's here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=Z\\_ZPwmm\\_tXQ#t=522](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=Z_ZPwmm_tXQ#t=522)

