

The Augusta Chronicle

COLUMNS | Opinion *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

Campbell Vaughn: With high heat comes the need to extra precautions with your lawns

Campbell Vaughn Columnist

Published 4:05 a.m. ET Aug. 18, 2023

I am not sure if you noticed, but the temperature seemed a little drastic this past week; enough to where I have been daydreaming about how to make an air conditioner I could wear on my shoulders for the 30 seconds it takes to walk to the car from my office.

You know when some people say it isn't the heat, it is the humidity? This week, they both stink.

There are some things that I have been noticing in the landscape (from mostly out the living room window) that I thought I might mention for this time of year.

Bermuda lawns tips

Raise your lawnmower blade about one-half on bermuda lawns to keep them green. I increased my height about two mows ago and it really looks good.

You can add a little more nitrogen to Bermuda and zoysia lawns, but do it lightly and do it now; 16-4-8 or 15-0-15 should be good. I would do it now up until Labor Day. If you wait any longer, fertilizing will put the grass in to turbo mode when it really needs to start slowing down.

St. Augustine lawns tips

I am seeing chinch bugs attacking St. Augustine lawns regularly on my drives about town. I even had a small spot in my yard that they tried to infest.

If you aren't keeping the grass moist, look for them attacking the hottest and driest places in the lawn. A lot of times they will be near some type of hardscape like a curb or walkway where it radiates heat.

There are a bunch of chemicals you can use to treat them when you do see infestations. Make sure to treat quickly, because they can overtake a lawn in a hurry and turn a nice St. Augustine lawn into a barren wasteland.

Take extra care with pesticides

With this heat, be extra careful when spraying pesticides for insect and weed infestations.

I have gotten many calls about Crape Myrtle Bark Scale and mealy bugs on magnolias. Treatment isn't difficult but when the sun is baking like it is, some pesticides can really burn plants. If it isn't an emergency to treat, wait until it cools down some before treating. If it is a nasty issue, spray early in the morning or late in the evening.

Weed control this time of year is also tough. If you have well established weeds, you are probably only going to hurt their feelings if you spray them in your lawn.

Stick to spot spraying early in the morning or late in the evening on hard to kill weeds or ones that have just popped up. It is also a good idea to keep them mowed down so they won't reseed.

Frost will eventually kill these summer annual weeds, but cold weather seems like it is a long time away.

Hummingbirds and frogs getting fed

I have had some pretty neat animal encounters in my own yard these past few weeks.

The hummingbirds are loving my blue salvia and are devouring the sugar water in my feeder. I was looking out the window at a male ruby throated hummingbird and my feeder was empty after only being replenished two days before. He was watching me watch him through the window. He hovered staring right at me and went back to the feeder and then back to me. He was definitely telling me to "fill it up, buddy." I got the hint.

Another animal that we are enjoying watching are the green treefrogs (*Hyla cinerea*). These little guys come to the windows and attach themselves which is super cool because we can see them like they are in an aquarium.

They like to stay on the windows at night because the light from in the house attracts the insects and the little green guys use it as a buffet. These frogs seem to like this brutal weather because I counted six on the windows just the other night. They are also the Georgia state

amphibian, which is also pretty fun to see since I am a pretty big fan of Georgia and its wildlife. Now I wish that Georgia would turn down the heat and humidity until next summer.