

Hey, this is your lawn talking. I must speak up because, like Rodney Dangerfield, I get no respect! You think you are helping me; however, you are literally killing me! Would you like to know how you are stressing me out?

1. Let me rest! It's okay for me to be brown during the winter. I'm trying to tell you to let me rest. My roots are actively growing, and in order for that to happen, my shoots on top of the ground must go dormant and rest. And don't "winterize" me! I don't need applications to help stimulate my roots. Give me a little credit – I can do that on my own, naturally. When winter weeds come to visit me, no need to poison them. Like your snow-bird friends; when it starts to warm up, they'll disappear.
2. Stop cutting me! From November through April, I'm resting. I'm asking you nicely to cancel your mowing service during this time. Oh, I understand they hook you on year-round service, but hey, wake-up! I don't want to be mowed and I obviously don't need to be mowed. Take it from the University of Florida website: *Turfgrass undergoes physiological stress with each mowing event, particularly if too much leaf tissue is removed. Effects of removal of too much shoot tissue at one time can produce long-term damage to the turf. This can leave turf susceptible to other stresses such as insects, disease, drought, and sunscald. Mowing also greatly influences rooting depth. Advantages of the deeper root system are greater tolerances to drought, insects, disease, nematodes, temperature stress, poor soil conditions, nutrient deficiencies, and traffic. Development of a deeper root system responds to higher mowing heights. Mowing too low is a primary cause of turf death and should be avoided.* Around April, I start to wake up and recover from dormancy, so you can think about mowing then. Don't let anyone tell you my first cutting needs to be extra short in order to ... whatever. In fact, how often do you get a haircut? Then why do you cut me so often? I really do understand they hook you on weekly service, but listen to me. Look at me. I don't need to be cut every week. When my shoots are long, my roots are strong. Consequently, I would not require consistent fertilizer, weed-control or supplemental watering (irrigation). I also understand that the brochures say to mow St. Augustine grass 3-4", but what would it take for you to try mowing me at the highest setting on the mower? Raise the bar. Nothing bad will happen, I promise.
3. Stop over-feeding me! University of Florida says: *When to fertilize your lawn depends on a few things, but the biggest rule is to fertilize only when your lawn is actively growing. In South Florida, turfgrass grows year-round, while in North and Central Florida, it grows from roughly April through October.* So, fertilize me with a balanced fertilizer, 10-0-10, once a year, in May only. How easy is that! Newsflash: *When looking for fertilizer, "weed and feed" products are not recommended for a Florida-Friendly landscape. While it may seem like a time-saver to apply these products at once, the truth is they are more likely to hurt your landscape than help.*
4. Stop poisoning me! You're killing me. Literally. You may think that you are eradicating pests that are harmful to me; however, I depend on many of these so-called "pests". There may be an insect that attacks me, but *it's difficult to predict from one season to the next which of these will cause problems. Some cause problems every year while others rarely appear.* So, why spray me consistently with a toxin that is not necessary and stressing me? Do you shower with a toxic substance regularly in order to prevent, say, a dubious mosquito bite? Rule #1 for attracting birds... stop applying pesticides. Birds

land on me in search of food – insects. In addition, have you ever wondered about the growing diagnoses of cancer in pets? Not to mention your children and grandchildren. And yourself.

5. Stop drowning me! I don't need to be watered, especially when I'm not actively growing. In the summer, when you see brown patches in me, what do you do? You call your irrigation guy because you believe the patch is not receiving adequate water. You call your yard guy because you believe it might be cinch bugs. (That's not probable because we know that cinch bugs are fond of sidewalks, so not likely to be in the middle of the yard.) He may tell you it is a fungus and spray a fungicide (anything that ends in cide, is not good). Well, UF says, *With Florida's humid, hot climate, fungus is the cause of most plant diseases.* Fungus is caused by overwatering. Doesn't it make more sense to stop overwatering? Please stop drowning me and allow me to dry out between rainfalls. Just once a week supplemental irrigation is up to 52 times more than what I need. Are you concerned about occasional flooding? When I am not allowed to dry out, I get saturated during storms and then unable to drain properly. Turn off and padlock the automatic irrigation system. I hear about other lawns that have no irrigation system and are healthier than I. They are allowed to grow higher and are not stressed out.

When are you going to listen to information based on research rather than opinions from those whose livelihoods depend on my weakness? I hate to be so blunt, but can't you find better ways to spend your money... other than contributing to my demise? Why add so much stress to me and probably, you too! I would really appreciate your commitment to give me a break this year. I beg you. Stop cutting me, fertilizing me, poisoning me and drowning me. Be like Aretha Franklin, and give me a little R- E -S -P -E -C -T.

Naturally yours,
Your Lawn