

PECAN GROVE MUD NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2007

Your Lawn Needs You This Fall

Although the high temperatures may be holding on, we are creeping towards the beginning of Fall. And cooler weather means we should begin to alter our lawn care routine.

In last Fall's newsletter, we offered up a comprehensive guide to preparing your lawn for dormancy. Following some simple lawn care tips today can give you a healthy head start in the Spring. In fact, experts agree that the appropriate lawn care in the Fall can have more of an impact on the year-round health of your lawn than at any other time of year.

Below are some of those important tips. For the full story in last year's newsletter, go to our website (www.pecangrovemud.com), click on the "Newsletter" link and then the "Fall 2006" file.

- Plants, lawns and gardens do require less water in the Fall and Winter months, but that doesn't mean they can go without. Beginning in October, watering times should be progressively cut back by 10 percent every three weeks until the winter rains arrive.
- Continue watering until the ground (on those rare occasions) freezes. This will reduce freeze injury by filling air pockets below, insulating the roots of trees and plants. Lawns that are moist going into Winter recover from dormancy more quickly in the Spring.
- Make sure you rake and remove the majority of those leaves/pine needles to allow your yard to breathe. You can add them to your mulch pile or garden or dispose of them by using your lawn mower to mulch them into the grass.
- When the grass has stopped growing and the last of the leaves have fallen, it's time for you to pull the lawn mower out for the last cut. Set your mower blades to cut fairly high (between 1-1/2 and 2 inches long) so your grass can take in the nutrients to store in its roots.
- No two soils are alike, so it's wise to get a soil sample to see what your lawn needs to be fed. They are available for a nominal fee (\$25-\$30) from the Texas A&M Soil Science Lab and well worth the money.

For additional information and website links to other valuable sources, visit our website today. The Pecan Grove MUD Board of Directors is here to serve you and we hope our communication sources bring you interesting and useful tips year round. **Have a great Fall season!**



DON'T FLUSH YOUR MONEY AWAY -- FIX THAT LEAK!

We've all heard the slow drip of a faucet or the hiss of a leaking toilet, but have we really stopped to think about how much of a drain on our finances (and resources) those seemingly minor leaks can cause?

Think about this: *a leaking toilet tank can waste up to 200 gallons of water per day and cost you over 60 cents per day or almost \$20 a month and a faucet dripping at a rate of one drop per second, can waste up to 2,700 gallons per year!* Now, that's reason enough to take the simple steps necessary to find (and fix) those leaks.

Look for the Warning Signs

There are the obvious: a dripping faucet or a running toilet, but some leaks are a bit more conspicuous and may only be detected by closely monitoring your monthly water bill and your water meter. One of the first indications of a water leak is an unexplained increase in your monthly water bill. If the increase can't be tied back to a known spike in usage (house guests, faucet left on, increased

outdoor use, etc.), then the chance of a leak (either from a faucet, toilet or a break in the water line between the meter and the house) is high.

Another way to identify leaks is to monitor your water meter. To do so, you will need two hours of no water usage. First step: turn off all the water - inside and outside the house. Write down the reading on the meter and the position of the sweep hand, and wait at least two hours. At the end of this time, read the meter again. If the second reading is different from the first, that means water is still flowing through the meter and you've got a leak to find...and fix!

Start With the Toilet

Most household water leaks occur here and testing to find out if you have one is a snap. Just take your basic food coloring (any color) out of the pantry and you're ready to go. Flush the toilet and then put enough food coloring in the tank to color the water. Don't flush the toilet again for at least an hour. If the water in the bowl of the toilet shows coloring, you have



a leak that needs to be repaired.

Simple Fix for a Leaky Faucet

Leaky faucets...especially those with slow drips can be ignored for long periods of time. It's easy to put off something that seems to have so little impact. But what if we told you that *even the slowest of drips can cost you over \$20 per year!* Remember to check faucets inside and outside the home. In most cases, leaks can be fixed by replacing a worn washer or "O" ring...it's simple and inexpensive.

Still Can't Find the Leak?

If you're sure there's a leak, but you're having trouble finding its source, also look at your water softener, sprinkler system or a swimming pool with an automatic fill device. Still no luck? It may be time to call in an expert. They will more than likely find the elusive leak and get it fixed. Taking care of the problem sooner than later is key. Every day a leak isn't fixed, valuable water and money are wasted. ■

CHECKING FOR TOILET LEAKS...EASY AS 1, 2, 3



Avoid the cost and damage of over-watering your lawn... install a rain sensor today!

If you have an underground sprinkler system, odds are it's equipped with an automatic timer. This can be a major convenience, but can also result in over-watered lawns and wasteful watering practices. Why? Think about this: in southeast Texas, unlike many other regions of the U.S., we get our occasional rains. And on rainy days, we don't need to supplement with our sprinkler system - nature has already done the work for us. It is, however, easy to forget to turn those automatic timers off, and as a result, it's not uncommon to see sprinkler systems running full force during or soon after a rainstorm.

What effect does over-watering have on my lawn...and pocketbook?

Officials with municipal and county water agencies are fully aware that over-watering is the most frequent mistake homeowners make in lawn care. In fact, according to the Texas Water Development Board (TWBD), as much as **half** of our outdoor water use in the warmer months is wasted because of poor watering practices.

Lawns irrigated three or four times a week, or everyday for that matter, cause grass and plants to develop a shallow root system, resulting in a real vulnerability to hot and dry weather and an inability to survive without constant watering.

The easiest way to correct this problem is to gradually reduce the frequency of watering.* It may feel uncomfortable at first, but you'll be promoting a healthier

yard...allowing root systems to push deeper into the soil in search of a drink. Before you know it, your lawn will be able to survive with less sprinkling sessions and you'll see a welcome savings on your water bill.

Looking for another way to help your lawn hold moisture? Don't cut your grass too short. Optimum height for St. Augustine is three inches. Anything shorter than this can cause the soil to dry out quickly and can cut into the stem - causing grass to lose its ability to photosynthesize and making it more susceptible to disease and insect problems.



What is a rain sensor and why should I install one?

The demand for water in Texas is increasing. In an effort to help conserve this precious natural resource - also known as "blue gold" - residents and business owners charged with taking care of landscaping are urged to install rain sensors, or rain shut-off devices, on automatic sprinkler systems.

Rain sensors - small devices wired to the common line on an automatic sprinkler system - are designed to override and shut off



the automatic watering cycle when a certain level of rainfall is detected (shut-off level is usually set at $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of rain). Rain sensors do not affect the sprinkler system's overall timing device. Once the collection dish dries out, the automatic timer kicks in.

Rain sensors not only protect your lawn from over-watering and provide sometimes significant cost savings on your water bill, but they also cut down on the wear and tear of your sprinkler system.

If you have an automatic sprinkler system, consider adding a rain sensor today. Or if you have plans to upgrade or add a brand new system, make sure a sensor is included. Your lawn and your pocketbook will thank you!

**The recommended watering cycle is two periods of irrigation per week - about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch of water per period (which usually takes about 15 minutes). Manual systems take longer to deliver the $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch of water required, so you might consider placing a few short empty cans (ex. Tuna fish cans) on the lawn and time how long it takes to reach the $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mark. ■*

Are You Prepared? Another Hurricane Season Is Upon Us

Although the 2006 hurricane season paled in comparison to the devastation of 2005's Katrina and Rita - the fear and lack of preparedness still lingers in our minds. And the 2007 Atlantic Hurricane Season predictions are not encouraging. According to the NOAA's (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration) Climate Prediction Center, "NOAA scientists are predicting an 85 percent chance of an above-normal season". The recent Hurricanes Dean and Felix may be proof of that.

It's hard to believe that another (possibly active) hurricane season is upon us, but if we're prepared, there's no need to panic. We may not be able to keep them from coming, but we can do everything in our power to protect ourselves should one head our way.

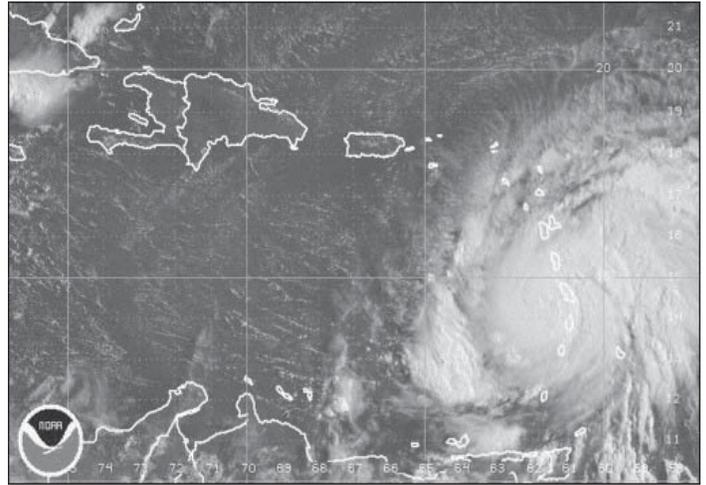
What is a Hurricane?

A hurricane is a severe tropical storm that forms in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and in the eastern Pacific Ocean. Through contact with warm ocean waters, these storms gather heat and energy and increase power through evaporated seawater.

To be categorized as a Category One hurricane, the storm must have winds of at least 74 miles per hour, and Category Five hurricanes (the largest and most destructive) must have winds greater than 155 miles per hour. Most damage, as we saw in the case of Katrina and Rita, is caused by heavy rain, strong winds and the dangerous "storm surge" - all of which contribute to damaged buildings, trees, cars and community infrastructures (electricity, water supply and of course, levees), and sometimes loss of life.

How do I Prepare for a Hurricane?

Hurricane season - which runs from June 1 to November 30 - generally ramps up in August and peaks in early September into October, but we must be prepared for a storm at any time. To help ensure your family and friends are as safe as possible this year, we've compiled some helpful hints and sectioned them into four categories: 1) Before a Hurricane Forms, 2) Before the Storm Hits, 3) During the Storm, and 4) After the Storm. Please familiarize yourself with these tips and share them with your family members and co-workers.



Before a Hurricane Forms

- Know the hurricane risks in this area, and your community safety plan.
- Visit the Harris County Homeland Security & Emergency Management website (www.hcoem.org) to find comprehensive information on developing a family hurricane action plan.
- Review the condition of emergency equipment, such as flashlights, radios, generators, etc., and make sure your fire extinguishers are placed in proper locations around your home.
- Ensure you have enough non-perishable food and water on hand.
- Trim trees and shrubbery.
- Buy plywood or shutters to protect doors and windows.
- Clear clogged rain gutters and downspouts.

Before the Storm Hits

- Check media outlets for official news of the storm's progress.
- Fuel and service family vehicles.
- Have extra cash on hand.
- Prepare to cover all windows and doors with shutters or other shielding materials.
- Bring inside lightweight objects such as grills, lawn furniture, and garden tools.

During the Storm

In a Warning Area:

- Check media outlets for official news of the storm's progress.
- Complete preparation activities such as putting up shutters and storing loose objects.
- Follow instructions issued by local officials. Fort Bend County is not in a surge area, so the likelihood of a mandatory evacuation is small. But if it does

happen, **leave immediately if, and only if, told to do so.**

Improvements made due to the infamous gridlock of the Rita evacuation - such as contra flow lanes outside of Harris County and monitoring by planes and helicopters to reduce choke points - are certain to make the trip to safer ground much less of a hassle. Check www.hcoem.org for the new "Evacuation by Zip Code Map" and "Evacuation Contraflow Routes".

- Notify neighbors and family members of your plan to evacuate.

- Take pets with you. Note: Shelters may not accept pets.



If Staying Home:

- Stay at home if you have not been ordered to leave.
- Stay inside a well-constructed building.
- Turn refrigerator to its coldest setting and keep closed.
- Turn off utilities if told to do so by authorities.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Unplug small appliances.
- Fill a bathtub, sink, or large containers with water for sanitary purposes.

In Case of Strong Winds:

- Stay away from windows and doors even if they are covered.
- Close all interior doors, and brace external doors.
- Stay in an interior first-floor room, such as a bathroom or closet.
- Lie on the floor under a table or another sturdy object.

After the Storm

- Check media outlets for official news of the storm's passing and current road conditions. Wait until an area is declared safe before entering.

- Do not attempt to drive across flowing water.



- Stay away from moving water, and do not allow children to play in flooded areas.

- Call in emergency responders to attempt rescues. Many people have been killed or injured trying to rescue others from flooded areas.

- Stay away from standing water. It may be electrically charged.

- Have professionals check gas, water, and electrical lines for damage.

- Use tap water for drinking and cooking only after local officials declare it safe to do so.



We all hope that this year's hurricane season will be quiet and uneventful, but, just in case, it's always wise to be prepared. Take the above suggestions to heart and provide you and your family with the best chance possible of staying safe. ■



Do Your Part to Prevent Stormwater Pollution Today

The water that flows into your storm sewer is discharged **untreated** into the very bodies of water we use for swimming, fishing, and even drinking water. So, it's extremely important that we keep harmful substances out of the path of rainwater, which can carry them down the sewers and into our lakes, streams, rivers and coastal waters. In fact, more water pollution comes from this deluge of dirt, trash and toxics than from all the sewage and industrial plants in the nation. (Source: www.lcra.org)

We've stressed the importance of preventing stormwater pollution in the past, and we are just as passionate about getting that message across today. Please take a moment to review the below information and continue to do your part in preventing stormwater pollution.

The Effects Can Be Devastating

Without careful planning and the cooperation of our communities, stormwater pollution can have devastating effects on our water quality, our plant and animal life, and even on us. Think

about this:

■ Excess nutrients carried into water sources by stormwater runoff can cause algae blooms. When algae die, they sink to the bottom and decompose in a process that removes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic organisms can't exist in water with low dissolved oxygen levels.

■ Sediment can cloud the water and destroy aquatic habitats by making it difficult or impossible for aquatic plants to grow.

■ Debris, such as plastic bags, six-pack rings, bottles, and cigarette butts washed into water bodies can choke, suffocate, or disable aquatic life like ducks, fish, turtles, and birds.



■ Bacteria and other pathogens can wash into swimming areas and create health hazards, often making beach closures necessary.

■ Household hazardous wastes like insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, used motor oil, and other auto fluids can poison aquatic life. In turn, land animals and humans can become sick from eating diseased fish and shellfish or ingesting polluted water.

■ Polluted stormwater often affects drinking water sources, causing health problems and increased drinking water treatment costs.

What Can I Do?

Residential

Recycle or properly dispose of household products that contain chemicals, such as insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, and used motor oil and other auto fluids. Don't pour them onto the ground or into storm drains.

Lawn Care

Excess fertilizers and pesticides applied to lawns and gardens wash off and pollute streams. In addition, yard clippings and leaves can wash into storm drains and not only contribute nutrients and or-

ganic matter to streams, but can also lead to storm sewer backups and increase street flooding during downpours (such as was experienced on August 27th of this year).

- Don't overwater your lawn. Consider using a soaker hose instead of a sprinkler.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly. When use is necessary, use the chemicals in the recommended amounts. Use organic mulch or safer pest control methods whenever possible.
- Compost or mulch yard waste. Don't leave it in the street or sweep it into storm drains or streams.
- Cover piles of dirt or mulch being used in landscaping projects.
- Don't apply fertilizer before a rain. The rain may wash the fertilizer into creeks and streams.
- Use a mulching lawnmower to allow the clippings to fertilize the lawn and retain moisture.



Pet Waste

Pet waste can be a major source of bacteria and excess nutrients in local waters.

- When walking your pet, remember to pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. Flushing pet waste is the best disposal method.
- Leaving pet waste on the ground increases public health risks by allowing harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and eventually into local water bodies.

Residential Landscaping

- **Permeable Pavement:** Traditional concrete and asphalt don't allow water to soak into the ground. Permeable pavement systems allow rain to soak through, decreasing stormwater runoff.
- **Rain Barrels:** Collect rainwater from rooftops in mosquito-proof containers. The water can be used later on lawn or garden areas.



- **Rain Gardens and Grassy Swales:** Specially designed areas planted with native plants can provide natural places for rainwater to collect and soak into the ground. Rain from rooftop areas or paved areas can be diverted into these areas rather than into storm drains.
- **Vegetated Filter Strips:** Filter strips, areas of native grass or plants created along roadways or streams, trap the pollutants stormwater picks up as it flows across paved surfaces.



It's Not Just a Recommendation... It's the Rules

Pecan Grove MUD is responsible for maintaining drainage facilities and ensuring they are kept clear of any objects or debris that may block them and interfere with their intended purpose. Drainage facilities are to be used solely for carrying stormwater rainfall. Nothing else. The District's past and present directors take the issue of stormwater pollution very seriously. So seriously that regulations were added to the Pecan Grove Municipal Utility District Rate Order (pursuant to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act) outlining specific action that can be taken if a resident is found to be discharging any unauthorized materials into the storm sewers.

For details on unauthorized materials and the action that can be taken if a resident is found to be improperly disposing of them, refer to our online copy of the Pecan Grove MUD Rate Order. Go to <http://www.pecangrovemud.com/news-documents/index.html> and click on the PDF file called "Rate Order". Information can be found in Section 2F (p. 5) under "Excluded Flow and Waste" and Section 25 (p. 14 & 15) under "Drainage Facilities and Unauthorized Materials".

Please take a moment to familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations so that we can all work together to keep our storm sewers and water sources clean. ■

Pecan Grove MUD - Project Update

Construction at the Pecan Grove MUD Wastewater Treatment Plant is nearly complete. The project included removal of older treatment process units, construction of a new elevated headworks, and conversion of the entire plant to a single treatment process.

The headworks was constructed with new screening, compaction and bagging equipment, which allows the entire structure to be completely enclosed. All treatment process units have been converted to fine bubble aeration, allowing the plant's operational personnel greater flexibility and options for properly treating wastewater.

The contractor, LEM Construction Co. Inc., plans to complete the remaining minor work items and cleaning of the site by mid-September, allowing the project to finalize on schedule and with no change orders. ■

WHO TO CALL:

Water, sewer and drainage questions:

PGMUD Customer Service Office

2035 FM 359, Suite 13 (located in the rear of the
Sweet Mesquite Center)

(281) 238-5000

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and
2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

After Hours: (281) 238-5000;
24 hrs/7 days a week

NOTE: *If you have water or sewer related problems, PLEASE CALL US BEFORE YOU CALL THE PLUMBER! We will investigate the problem at no cost to you. If it is found to be a water district-related problem, we will arrange to correct it. If it is not a water district issue, we will provide our advice. Remember, we are here to help!*

Garbage or recycling service:

PGMUD at (281) 238-5000

WCA/TEW at (281) 368-8397

PGMUD Tax Questions:

Tax Tech at (281) 499-1223

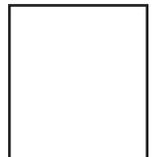
Park Reservations:

Ben Anders, YMCA at (281) 341-0791

The Pecan Grove MUD Board generally meets the last Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Pecan Grove Country Club. Meetings are open to the public and residents are encouraged to attend.

**Pecan Grove Municipal
Utility District**

**2035 FM 359, Suite 13
Richmond, TX 77469**



**Visit us online:
www.pecangrovemud.com**