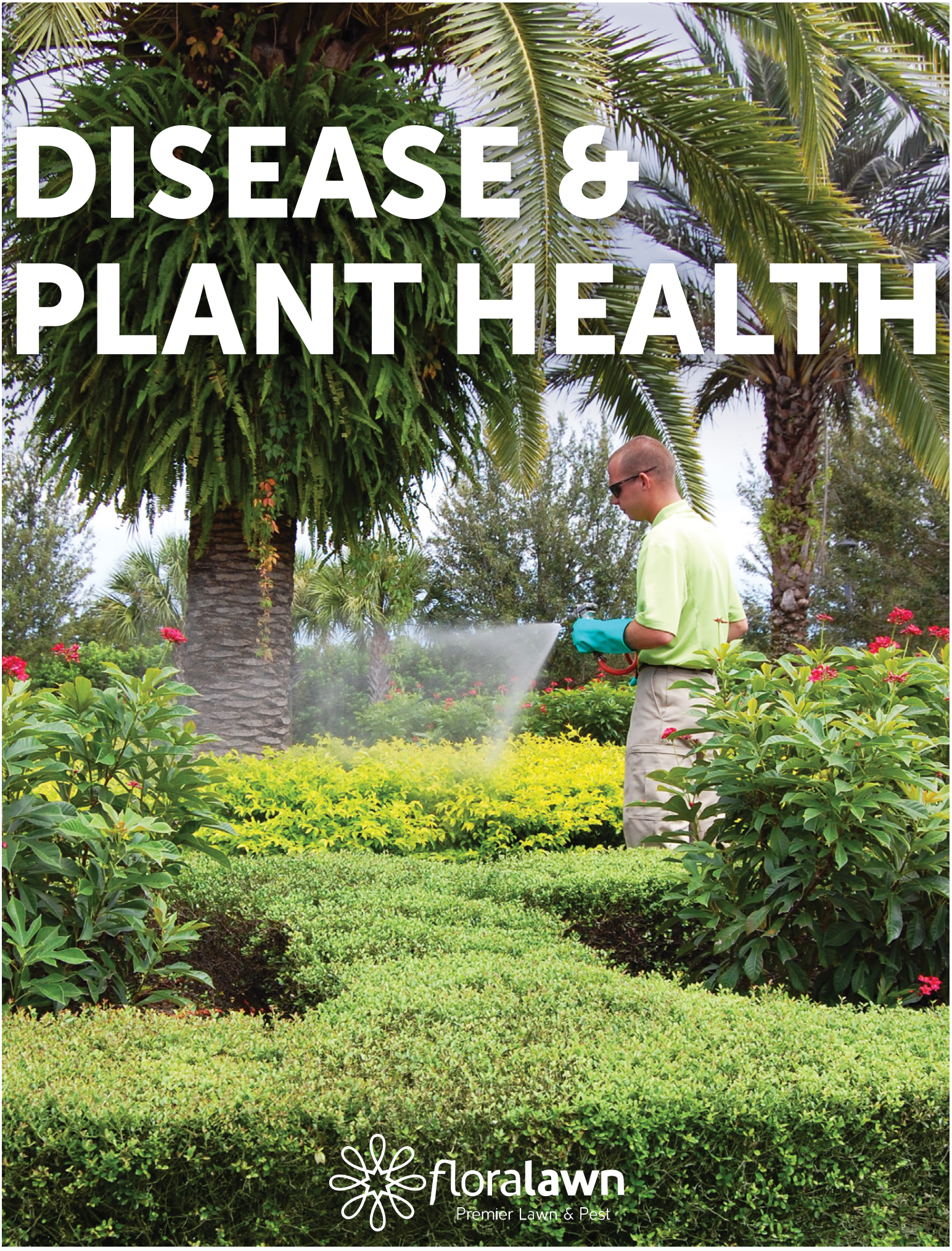
DISEASE & PLANT HEALTH



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Landscapes are living organisms with unique lifecycles. Diseases, insects, and deficiencies threaten to disrupt this evolution without intervention.

SEDGE GRASS

Sedges are of little economic value to man but can be very competitive with the desired crop for water, nutrients and space. Productive and functional warm-season turfgrass requires management to maintain desired turf quality. Often, undesirable weed species invade and become established, crowding out the desired grasses and degrading turf quality. One of the most difficult weed management challenges is controlling annual and perennial sedges, particularly in irrigated golf course and highly managed residential turf sites.

Sedges are annual or mostly perennial grass-like plants with aerial flower-bearing stems. In annual forms, the stem is solitary to mostly several with basal leaves. Perennial forms have a thick rootstock or an erect to horizontal underground rhizome usually with shortened internodes.

In sedges, as well as grasses, the seed head will be produced at the end of an aerial, erect stem. This three-sided stem is usually solitary and will be tufted with basal leaves. Root systems are fibrous, including species such as yellow and purple nutsedge which produce rhizomes and tubers. Flowers are extremely small and numerous and arranged in spikelets atop the stem.

BROWN PATCH FUNGUS

This disease usually begins as small patches that turn yellow followed by reddish-brown, brown, or straw colored as the blades start to die. Patches can expand to several feet in diameter. It is not uncommon to see rings of yellow or brown turf with apparently healthy turf in the center. Turf at the outer margin of a patch may appear dark and wilted. This disease is often confused with herbicide damage on St. Augustine grass.

Brown Patch Fungus is most common in mid to late summer when there are extended periods with high humidity and temperatures. Water on turfgrass leaf blades greatly increases infection and disease. If the lawn needs moisture, water to a depth of 6 inches early in the day, so the grass leaves will dry quickly.

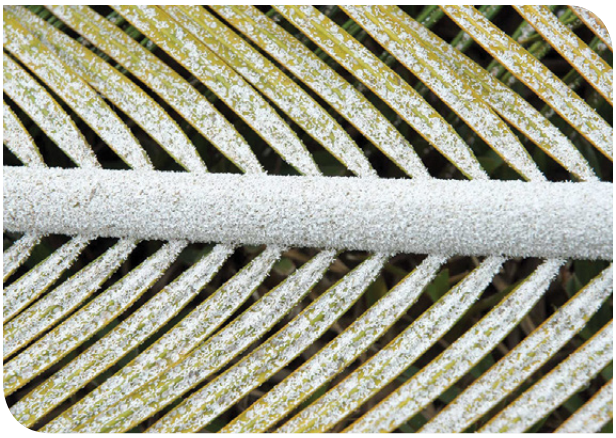
For the diseased turfgrass to recover, it must be actively growing. Symptoms do not disappear until new leaves develop and the old leaves are removed by mowing or decomposition. The fungicides simply stop the disease from spreading— they do not promote turfgrass growth.

FALSE OLEANDER SCALE

False oleander scale, an armored scale, was first discovered in 1942. The female armor is pear-shaped, shiny white, and 2 to 3 mm long. The size of the female scale may vary with the host. For example, it is slightly smaller on palmetto than on aucuba. The male armor is elongate, snow-white, feebly tricarinate, and about 1 mm long. Males usually occur in clusters on the leaf.

False oleander scale is probably not a good name as this species has over 100 plant species recorded as hosts in Florida.

Scales, especially armored scales are very difficult to control when mature. Examine plants for live scales by crushing the wax cover. Dead scales do not fall from plants. False Oleander Scale is covered in Floralawn's horticulture program.



CHILLI THRIPS

The first sighting of Chilli Thrips was on 1991 in a retail garden center in Okeechobee County. The prolonged feeding of Thrips curl tender leaves and buds, and will turn fruits and flowers from bronze to black in color. When thrips feed in high enough densities, or in sufficiently dry climates, this process results in the eventual desiccation and death of their host plant. Even low densities of thrips can contribute to the decline in plant health, especially during times of drought.

Thrips have a rapid life cycle, and can develop from egg to adult in slightly less than two weeks. They are known to develop resistance to pesticides extremely quickly. This is thought to be a consequence of the short timespan and large capacity of their reproductive cycle. In addition, they have an extremely wide host range, providing population reservoirs even after the most thorough pesticide application. To optimize control, product rotation is integral to resistance prevention programs.

PALM TREE DEFICIENCY

Palm tree deficiencies are most often misdiagnosed as disease. Palms growing in landscapes or field nurseries are subject to a number of potentially serious nutritional deficiencies. Although Florida soils range significantly, deficiencies of Nitrogen, Potassium, Magnesium, Iron, Manganese, and Boron are common on palms growing in all of these soil types to some degree.

Most palm nutrient deficiencies can be readily diagnosed using visual symptoms alone. In many cases, leaf analysis can also help in confirming a diagnosis. Soil analysis is not particularly useful for diagnosing palm nutrient deficiencies, since palm nutrient symptomology often bears little resemblance to soil nutrient profiles. This is precisely why trunk injections are such a valuable and beneficial alternative to other types of applications such as root and/or soil injections.

All of these deficiencies if caught early on are easily treated with specialized granular applications as well as trunk injections.

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