



CITY OF
FOLSOM
DISTINCTIVE BY NATURE

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Lorraine Poggione-City of Folsom-MLS Manager-355-7207 Office
Dan Rivers, City of Folsom- MLS Supervisor-351-3529 Office, 307-2100 Cell

Special Interest Article:

❖ FALL LAWN
CARE



FOLSOM BLVD.

IT'S TIME TO FALL.....

Why do leaves really fall off trees? It's not the wind. It's not the cold. It's because trees use 'scissors' to cut their leaves off. Around this time of year in the Northern Hemisphere, as the days grow shorter and colder, those changes trigger a hormone in leaf-dropping trees that sends a chemical message to every leaf that says, in essence, 'Time to go! Let's part company!'

Once the message is received, little cells appear at the place where the leaf stem meets the branch. They are called 'abscission' cells. They have the same root as the word scissors, meaning they are designed, like scissors, to make a cut.



October and November have been busy months! We had a blustery October starting with a fairly large storm on Tuesday, October 13. We had numerous trees and limbs blow down, city fence sections fail, and several streetlight tops get knocked to the ground. The clean up started the very next day with our City and Sunworld crews busily picking up and removing debris and various contractors working with us to replace broken streetlights. Overall, the damage was manageable and did not overly burden the crews or budgets.

Highlights in the L&L's

October and November has been a busy time for our team.

- Working with Public Works to replace landscaping and repair irrigation along Folsom Boulevard
- Working with consultant (SCI Consultants) for public outreach to Folsom Heights and Blue Ravine Oaks for assessment increases
- Working with Public Works to accommodate construction demands and issues related to ADA compliance ramps and street paving projects
- Working with CalFire to finalize grant acceptance to begin Tree Inventory of City Street Trees (expect to get grant in 2-4 months)
- Assessing water conservation efforts and positive impacts (see below for details)
- Replanting projects in Natoma Station and Cobble Hills Ridge
- Working on the Sphere of Influence Specific Plan and EIR-making comments and providing input with regard to funding and management of the over 1000 acres of open space coming into the Plan (much of which will be managed by our division)

Water Conservation Analysis

For the last year, the L&L Districts have been diligent to not only comply with the Stage 3 and then Stage 2 water alert but also to find ways to make significant changes and improvements to how we manage irrigation in our districts.

Some of the things we have done to conserve water include the following:

- ✓ Check all systems more regularly
- ✓ Flag all breaks and repairs needed
- ✓ Follow up on whether repairs were made
- ✓ Immediately repair when possible breaks and leaks
- ✓ Recheck all programming of controllers to ensure areas are watered correctly (with regard to slope, soil, plant type, material maturity, etc)
- ✓ Reduce all watering to 3 days per week
- ✓ Modify sprinkler heads where possible to increase efficiencies (i.e. remove sprays heads near curbs/street and replace with mist type spray heads and/or more efficient spray heads)
- ✓ Electronically control via satellite over 70 controllers (Evolution DX) and 20 controllers (via in house computer)

Results have been impressive! When we compared our water use BEFORE (2008) we started our rigorous program of repairs and implementation of the water alerts our 25 districts utilized over 250,000 CCF (cubic feet) which is equivalent to 1,870,000 gallons and now in 2009 the same districts over the same amount of time have used 164,000 CCF or 1,226,720. A water savings of over 30%!

Oak Avenue Retrofit Project. With a retrofit area of 3.13 acres and removal of 1.5 acres of turf, our Oak Avenue median and streetscape project is saving over 48% of the irrigation water after the first year. The entire project has been a success with great results in irrigation water savings, reduced maintenance, and overall improved aesthetics.



FOLSOM BLVD.



OAK AVE.

Fall Lawn Care

by Bob Ritzman, Municipal Landscape Services Division

Fall is the most important time of year to strengthen and care for your lawn. Here are some tips for taking care of your lawn.

There are two types of grasses. Cool season grasses are the most common in our area; they are typically fescue and blue grass. Their peak growing season is in the fall. Fall is the best time to strengthen and cultivate these types of lawns. Warm season grasses like Bermuda, Zoysia, St. Augustine are not that common in northern California as they prefer temperatures over 90 degrees.

One of the most important tasks you could do in the fall is dethatching if your lawn has over ½ inch of thatch. Thatched lawns can harbor insects and diseases. Core aeration is also very useful. It allows the soil to breathe and water to infiltrate. Top dressing is a great way to finish off fall soil improvements by adding nutrients and smoothing out lumps in the lawn. Top dress after core aeration and seeding of the bare or thin areas. Correcting soils PH can also be done in fall with top dressing. Test soil and make adjustments as recommend by soil or lawn experts. Fertilizing is a task that should take place year round. Fall fertilizing will help your lawn survive the winter harshness and recover in the spring. Best tip for fall fertilizing is to use a ratio of 3:1:2 N:P:K 4- 6 weeks before first frost. Typical first frost is late December. Most cool season grasses need 4 pounds of nitrogen per year per 1000 square feet. For fall application, winterizing will have a higher rate of potassium for cell wall thickness and winter hardiness, 4-6 weeks before frost.

As long as your lawn is growing, keep mowing it. Most lawn growth will slow down especially between December and February. Mowing during winter months may only be needed every two weeks. Increase cut height to 3 ½ inches in the winter.

Other fall tasks: Keep leaves off of lawn as much as possible as leaf debris harbors weed seeds, pest and diseases. Leaf build-up will also smother and kill healthy grass. Your lawn will still need about 1 inch of water per week. If there is rain, turn Irrigation system to rain-off. Just remember to turn back on if there is no rain for more than a week.

A healthy lawn is the best line of defense against weeds.

For more information on Bob's secrets to a great lawn you can email him at rritzman@folsom.ca.us

