# The Growing Company Inc.

*Proactive care for commercial landscapes*

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# Summer Heat

## Turf Health

There are several maintenance practices that will help to sustain a lush, green grass through hot and dry summers.

**Aeration –** Aeration is the process of mechanically poking thousands of holes in the soil. These holes provide a direct passage way for water, oxygen, and nutrients to the roots of your turf. Aeration reduces compaction, and runoff while improving root growth. The best time to aerate is in the summer months.

**Effective Water Application –** It is best to water your grass during the early morning hours before daybreak (12am – 5am). Weather conditions are more stable and less wind is prevalent during early morning hours. It is not advised to water late in the day (6pm-11pm) because water has the opportunity to remain stagnant and create an ideal environment for fungus. Turf fungus spreads rapidly during warm humid evenings.

**Mulching Mower –** Mulching mowers allow us to recycle nutrients and conserve water. These mowers finely shred grass clippings and return them to the turf area. The rate of decomposition increases during hot summer months and rapidly returns nutrients to the soil (25% of fertilizer needs). In addition, the layer of mulch within your turf shades the soil and slows down water evaporation.

**Sharpen Mower Blade –** A dull cutting edge will cause tearing and leave brown tips on each blade of grass. Damaged turf is more susceptible to disease and also needs more attention to ensure survival. In addition, a sharp blade allows a mower to perform efficiently during the summer when grass is cut at a longer length. Longer turf length helps to shade the ground/root area and prevents water from evaporating rapidly.

## Combat Heat Island Effect

A heat island is an area with consistently higher temperatures than surrounding areas because of greater heat retention from buildings, concrete, and asphalt. Heat islands increase summertime peak energy demand, air conditioning costs, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. A few modifications that can be made within your landscape to reduce heat island effect are:

✔ **The Shade Factor –** Trees are a natural resource that improve air and water quality, plus save us energy. Shading the south and west exposures of a building will reduce energy costs. In the summertime, generally 10 to 30 percent of the sun's energy reaches the area below a tree canopy.

✔ **Vegetation Cooling –** Vegetation is a simple and effective way to reduce urban heat islands. Trees and vegetation lower surface and air temperatures by providing shade and through evapotranspiration. Evapotranspiration can reduce peak summer temperatures by 5 to 10 degrees.

✔ **Selective Hardscaping –** When selecting hardscape, it is important to consider the amount of heat that will be retained by the material installed. For example, asphalt is black and absorbs a high amount of solar energy. The color white, on the other hand, is reflective and returns most solar energy (heat) back into the atmosphere. There are now cool pave coats (CPC) that can be applied directly over asphalt and concrete to change the surface rate of heat absorption. Thus, the area would be much cooler.

## Sustainable Tip

### Use Mulch

Organic mulches such as wood chips, bark, or other locally available materials help improve the health of landscape bed areas. Mulches moderate the soil temperature and retain moisture during dry weather, reducing the need for watering. It also prevents soil surface crusting, which is a hard thin layer that forms on the soil surface and has low permeability. This condition leads to water runoff. Organic mulches can improve soil structure when they decay and become topsoil.

## Bug of the Month

Albert Einstein once stated that, "If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live." One undisputed fact is that honey bees are an essential contributor to our local ecosystem. The honey bee is solely responsible for the pollination of over 90 fruit and vegetable crops worldwide. Honey bees visit at least 50 flowers and can fly 6 miles per collection trip. The honey bee is the only insect that produces food eaten by man, illustrating a unique coexistence.

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