

Orchid Hammock Landscape Report – 2009

The landscaping contract for Orchid Hammock was revised to incorporate fertilization, weed control and plant pest control functions for improved efficiency and cost savings. After a competitive bidding process, Precision Landscaping was retained as the landscaping contractor for Orchid Hammock. Precision also provides landscaping services to nine other communities within IBIS. In addition, Hulett Inc. was retained to provide perimeter insecticide application around our buildings.

The most critical issue for the landscaping committee this term has been the spore infestation that has killed a total of 18 Queen Palm trees within Orchid Hammock. Soil analysis has confirmed presence of this spore that has infected other communities within IBIS. Unfortunately, there is no treatment to either prevent or cure this condition. Our only option has been to remove the dead trees, and we have replaced them with 14 ft Foxtail Palms that are much heartier, and not subject to this problem. We are replacing the lost trees as our budget permits. Our first priority is to assure that each quad contains at least two Palms in its entry courtyard, and then to replace other missing trees when our finances permit. The Coconut Palms that accent our Circles are not affected by the spore.

In the past term, the new Board faced a number of additional issues related to landscaping including; fertilization cycle, excessive drought, sprinkler control, clogged underground drains, and of course the severest cold snap in many years.

Grass, palm trees, and shrubs in this area do best when they receive their heaviest fertilization in March. This fertilization did not occur in March 2009, and by the time the new landscaping contract was in place, there was no way to go back in time and correct this problem. A heavy fertilization of palms, grass and shrubs will be applied this March, and we expect to see healthier plant growth and improvement in our lawn areas.

The excessive heat and relative dry spell in the latter half of the year caused noticeable damage to our lawns, which have since responded to treatment. The underground drains behind Quads 7 & 8 became clogged causing collection of standing water. These drains have since been cleaned out, and the areas have remained dry during the recent rainfalls. The area will continue to be monitored for further evaluation. The automatic sprinkler system required a new rain gauge which was added this past year. The system allows for automatic watering twice per week for fifteen minutes in each of 18 separate zones. Watering begins Thursday and Sunday at 12 am, unless the rain gauge is full. Numerous pop-up water valves have been flagged throughout Orchid Hammock. These are broken or not operating properly and a work order has been submitted for Precision to make the necessary repairs or adjustments.

The recent cold snap has not been kind to many of our ornamental bushes, palms, and other plants indigenous to the normally warm climate of Florida. Particularly hard hit have been the red-green leafed Crotons that add color to our courtyards, and the newly planted Crown-of-Thorns. The COTs should improve as the weather warms, and missing

or dead specimens will be replaced. These plants like well-drained soil and were being over-watered previously. The automatic sprinklers have been adjusted to correct this situation.

The degree to which the Crotons come back to health must await the return of warmer weather. We suspect that most plants will improve on their own, while others will need pruning. Those that do not respond will be replaced in the March-April time frame.

Upon Precision's recommendation, we will tie-back and heavily prune all of the flowering Oleander Trees in Orchid Hammock, in order to promote rapid and fuller re-growth. You may initially note a loss of color as you drive into the community, but the new growth will be much more dramatic as it comes in.

Finally, in the next few weeks we will be replacing plants, shrubs, and trees that have not survived the extended cold weather this winter.