

Landscape Myths: Can You Tell Fact from Fiction?

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Myth: Keep your lawn short. Shorter grass uses less water, so you don't need to water as much.

Fiction. If you let your grass grow to 3" in the summer, the longer grass blades will shade the soil below, reducing your water usage. Allowing your grass to grow longer will also result in deeper rooting, which will also reduce water usage.

Myth: Roses have thorns.

Fiction. Roses actually have prickles. Prickles sit on the outer layers of the stem and snap off easily. Thorns come from layers beneath the outer cane layer and do not snap off easily. They tend to break or not come off at all.

Myth: A tree will grow just fine without pruning.

Fiction. This may be true for forest trees, but not for most trees in suburban yards. Most of these trees will need some pruning to keep their shape and to remove fast-growing water sprouts. A general rule is never remove more than one-third of the tree's crown in one pruning. The best time to prune conifers is in the fall, when there is less pitch exuded. Prune deciduous trees in late winter or early spring, before the leaves appear. Palms and evergreens can be pruned anytime.

Myth: More fertilizer means faster growing trees and shrubs.

Fiction. The practical fact of the matter is that soil can only hold on to a certain amount of nutrients at one time. Once the soil is saturated with nutrients, the surplus nutrients leach out into the groundwater.



Myth: During a drought, a little water is better than no water at all.

Fiction. In actuality, doing this can severely damage your lawn. If your community is restricting water due to water shortages, and you are unable to provide the necessary water, it is best to let your grass grow dormant instead of feeding it a little water now and then. When your grass goes dormant, it might look dry or even turn brown, but it will most likely recover as soon as it rains or you are allowed to water more. When you only water a little bit every now and again, the grass roots grow closer to the surface of the soil, which make them more susceptible to drying out.

Myth: Tree topping is the proper way to prune a tree.

Fiction. Tree topping is the most expensive and detrimental form of pruning. Topping a tree creates large

wounds that allow rot and fungal decay to enter the tree. This not only can damage the tree's appearance, it can reduce the tree's life expectancy. Topping weakens the structure of the tree and causes limbs to drop. Topped trees are more likely to break apart in storms than trees that retain their natural shape. Never top a tree.

Myth: Organic fertilizers are better for your plants.

Fiction. Plants have no preference whether the nutrients they get are organic or not. They cannot differentiate between them. However, some fertilizers are better than others. High NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium) fertilizers can damage or burn some plants and feeder roots, or produce high levels of salts. Organics are much lower in NPK levels and release nutrients slower than the normally faster-acting chemical types. Care needs to be taken for