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# Hedgelines

August 2023

- Special Edition: The Landscaping Budget
- Saving without Sacrificing
- Proactive Tree Management
- The Age Factor: Budgeting for the Mature Landscape
- Budgeting Irrigation System Improvements

## Saving without Sacrificing Quality

**No doubt, you have been reviewing your budget for 2024.**

It's essential to ensure you're on track to meet your goals. If you're concerned about falling short, there are steps you can take to prepare. For example, you might want to take a closer look at your landscaping expenses, which tend to take up a significant portion of most O&M budgets. While it might be tempting to cut costs by bidding out this service, it's essential to remember that the lowest bid might not be the best option for your property. Instead, consider working with your current vendor to identify areas where you can reduce costs without sacrificing quality. At LMP, we value our client relationships and encourage open communication. We've worked with many properties to identify ways to cut costs without compromising the property's overall appearance. Before making any changes, we strongly urge you to call references and visit properties currently maintained by potential vendors.



Keep in mind that reducing your landscaping budget now could lead to costly repairs in the future, so it's important to consider the long-term impact of any decisions you make. Let us know if we can be of any assistance!



## Proactive Tree Management

- Fewer tree failures.**
- Healthier trees.**
- Budgets that are easier to justify.**
- There are abundant upsides to proactive tree management.**

Tree care is a crucial aspect of landscape maintenance as it adds to the beauty of your community and provides many environmental and social benefits. It can be overwhelming to know where to begin or understand your trees' current state. However, tree care can be a significant expense, and you must use your budget wisely.

Managing the tree and shrub assets for an entire community requires expertise in broad-level tree maintenance and a firm grasp of tree inventory management. Our Certified Arborist provides assessments and annual programs based on the specific arboriculture needs and works with your board to ensure the best approach for your community.

A well-planned and properly executed tree management program allows the association to make informed decisions protecting the value of your investment. Tree management begins with establishing a tree inventory and developing a plan around the association's goals in preserving and expanding the tree and shrub assets over the long term. LMP specializes in developing highly sustainable management plans that meet reasonable budget objectives.

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# The Age Factor: Budgeting for Mature Landscapes

Everyone strives for a colorful, well-managed landscape with curb appeal that accentuates the positive and eliminates the negative. Unfortunately, a variety of different factors can affect the lifespan of a landscape.

There's a difference between being alive and looking good enough to add aesthetic value to your property. The right plant in the right place is just one factor that benefits the life of a plant. The other major factor is providing your landscape with the proper professional maintenance it needs. Reasons plants have a shortened lifecycle in an urban setting:



**MORE  
GROWNS  
IN THE  
GARDEN  
THAN THE  
GARDENER  
SOWS.**  
SPANISH PROVERB

## Poor Planning & Neglect

Poor planning or a few years of neglect may have resulted in scraggly plants and overgrown shrubs that obscure the views rather than enhance them.

## Stress

Hot asphalt, pedestrian traffic, and car exhaust all take a toll on the life of your landscape. Plants and trees in parking lots, islands, small nonengineered sidewalk cutouts, and those growing in other small soil spaces have short lives, regardless of species.

## Proper Pruning

Pruning is selectively removing branches throughout a shrub for proper size, health, and structure while shearing targets just the outer edges of a shrub strictly for aesthetics.

Pruning cuts encourage growth throughout the plant. Still, with shearing, growth is limited to the plant's outer parts depriving the inner structure of enough light for photosynthesis, leading to "hollow shrub" syndrome and a much shorter lifespan.

## The Right Amount of Mulch

You want to avoid piling mulch up around the base of a shrub that creates a home for insects, who will attack the trunk.

## Proper Long Term Care

Routine Integrated Pest Management and Fertilization are essential for the health of your landscape.

Maintenance cannot compensate for plants past their prime or in the wrong place despite diligent management; they will never thrive.

## Strategic Planning

As you prepare and budget for your commercial landscaping services for the year ahead, it's worth looking at the big picture. The budget process can be overwhelming, especially if you have areas you would like to improve upon beyond the standard maintenance. When focused on doing everything you can to effectively achieve your budget goals, utilizing your landscape to its most significant advantage can make a measurable difference. But knowing how to evaluate your landscaping budget can seem particularly daunting, and you may even consider putting it off and "just maintaining" as is.

The good news is you don't have to do it alone! Now is a great time to strategize with your Account Manager and our Horticulture and Arbor specialists to help you through the process. We'll walk your property with you to start planning any renovations or enhancements you would like to prepare for the coming year or plan out in stages. LMP will walk you through each service, costs, landscape enhancements and how they can help you reach your goals — and develop an accurate budget.



# Smart Mulching

As with most gardening efforts, paying attention to the nuances and details of mulching will result in healthier, more productive plants and reduced maintenance. In the end, the biggest mistake is not to mulch. By matching the proper mulch to your landscaping zones and using it properly, you can put the powerful benefits of mulch to work for you.

Mulching is, after all, the fourth Florida Friendly Landscaping principle, and it's a great way to install some additional efficiency into your landscaping. Mulch is essential because it imitates the plant's and tree's natural habitat. In a forest, the floor is covered in a layer of debris containing organic materials and natural organisms. As the organic materials decompose, they replace the nutrients in the soil, and the natural organisms also help in the decomposition and replenishment processes. Mulch acts as a natural layer of debris. It helps foster nutrient replenishment and protects plants from extreme environmental conditions.



## Benefits of Mulching

Conservation of soil moisture and moderation of soil temperature are key benefits of mulching. Both organic and inorganic mulches increase soil moisture by slowing evaporation. As a result, mulch can increase water availability and decrease moisture fluctuation in the root zone. Organic mulches also can increase the water-holding capacity of sandy soils by increasing their organic matter content as they decompose. Inorganic mineral mulches may not conserve soil moisture as effectively as organic mulches.

Turfgrass roots have a competitive advantage over tree roots because of their greater density and close proximity to the soil surface. Competition with turfgrass for soil moisture becomes especially problematic for trees during periods of drought.

A mulched zone around trees protects against mechanical injury to tree roots growing on the ground's surface, especially for shallow-rooting species.

## How Deep Should the Mulch Layer Be?

General recommendations are impossible because many factors should be considered when deciding how deep the mulch layer should be. For example, the optimal depth of mulch will vary depending on soil texture, type of mulch, age of plants, and management objectives.

A thin layer of mulch does not suppress weeds or conserve moisture as effectively as a deeper layer. A thin layer also needs to be replenished more often, which increases maintenance costs. On the other hand, an excessively deep mulch layer can promote waterlogging of heavy soils, decrease soil oxygen levels, resulting in shallow rooting, and keep soils too warm during cooler months. Mulch can be applied under the drip line of mature trees to a greater depth than in a bed containing annual and perennial herbaceous plants.

The use of mulch in managed landscapes can have many benefits. When used properly, mulch can suppress weeds, conserve soil moisture, moderate soil temperature extremes, improve soil structure, increase soil fertility, and suppress some diseases. Unfortunately, improper use of mulch has been responsible for many problems in landscapes. Many of these problems can be avoided through simple precautions, such as composting fresh mulch before use and keeping mulch away from the stems of plants and walls of buildings. There are a few general rules that apply in all situations.

### SHREDDED MULCH



Cypress  
(3cu)



Eucalyptus  
(2cu)

### PINE



Large  
(3cu)



Mini  
(3cu)



Super Mini  
(3cu)



Pine Fines  
(2cu)



Pine Straw  
(Bales)

# Proactive Tree Management, *continued*

## Should All Trees Be Structurally Pruned?

The short answer is yes. There are, however, variations in how structural pruning is applied, depending on the mature size of the tree, tree age, its current architecture, species characteristics, and location in the landscape. The ideal condition of one dominant trunk with smaller branches distributed horizontally and vertically around it is essential for trees that become medium to large at maturity. Trees must support heavy loads, including the branches, foliage, and sometimes vines, and must hold up under external forces such as wind and rain.

### Lack of Structural Pruning

When trees are left to grow without structural pruning, they often develop large diameter branches originating low in the crown. Other defects that may form include:

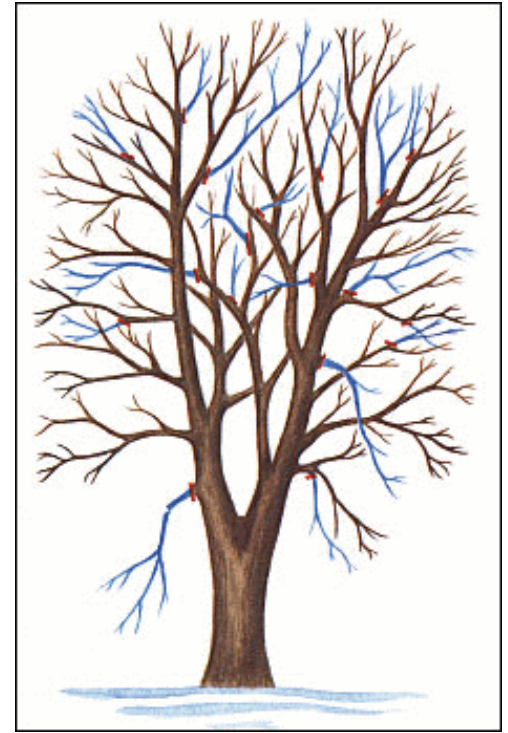
- ✦ Codominant stems.
- ✦ Large branches low on the trunk droop and become obstructions.
- ✦ Large, vigorous branches low on the trunk that compete with the leader or extend outside the crown.

Branches that develop a large aspect ratio become a significant part of the crown, and their attachment may be weaker than branches with a small ratio. These should be the focus of pruning efforts early in the tree's life.

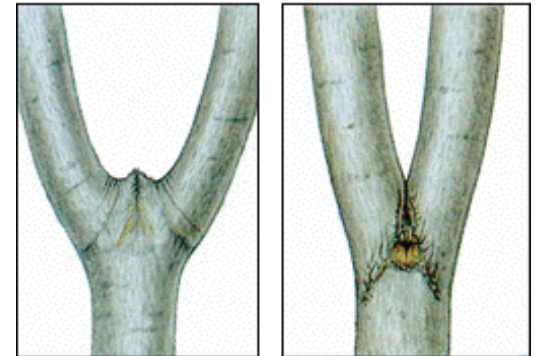
Another problem with retaining large-diameter branches low in the crown on trees in urban settings is that it is difficult to raise the crown to provide clearance. Raising the crowns of these trees by removing secondary branches from the large low branches provides only partial, temporary clearance and can result in overextended, weak limbs.

Trees can become a more sustainable resource when they are trained in structural pruning. Long-lived trees appropriately placed in the landscape provide appreciable benefits to urban and suburban landscapes. Training trees to a dominant leader with smaller-diameter branches is the most reliable method of developing a sustainable tree structure. Maintaining this basic structure throughout the tree's life minimizes the risk of failure and provides for large, structurally sound trees. There is no substitute for the arborist's objective, observation, and experience in the field.

Your trees' health, beauty, and safety are essential, and we strive to deliver the best possible solutions.



Crown thinning: branches to be removed are shaded in blue; pruning cuts should be made at the red lines. No more than one-fourth of the living branches should be removed at one time.



Strong Union

Weak Union



## WE SOLVE ISSUES

LMP's landscape management philosophy approaches the care of the landscape from a comprehensive, long-term perspective. Through our landscape assessment plan, we include your budgetary and site management requirements in our program to assist in future planning and cost controls. We pride ourselves on turning challenges into opportunities and complex issues into strategic plans.

### Sarasota

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# Budgeting Irrigation System Improvements

Retrofitting is a wise way to update your irrigation system and include the latest technologies without doing a tear-out. The update might include installing a smart controller or changing spray heads to the new Water-Sense products.

Following a complete system audit, we can help you identify ways to improve your irrigation system during a retrofit so you can maximize your system and budget.

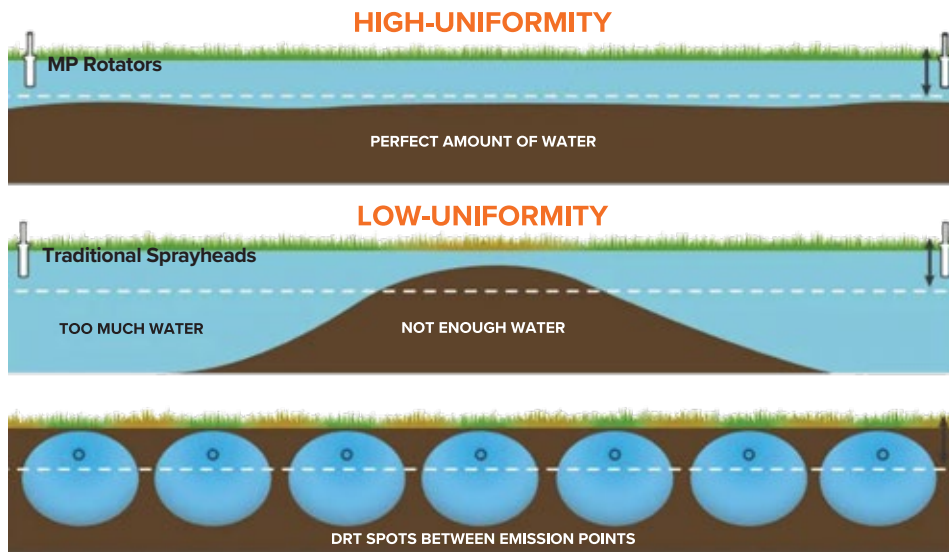
Get in touch if you want to discuss how to improve your water management program.



## High-Pressure Spray Bodies

Spray Bodies that are designed to deliver consistent outlet pressure for optimal flow rates that reduce misting and fogging — resulting in the best possible performance for even coverage and water savings.

Convert your standard existing sprinklers from inefficient sprays to the highly efficient MP Rotators. The MP Rotators apply water using heavy droplet streams at a matched precipitation rate — this means water is optimally applied at a rate that the soil can best absorb. This slower application rate allows water to gently soak into the soil and achieves an even distribution throughout the area being irrigated. This increased efficiency results in 30% less water use when compared to traditional sprays and significantly reduces wasteful runoff.



MP Rotors closely match what typical soils can absorb, delivering consistent outlet pressure for optimal flow rates that reduce misting and fogging.

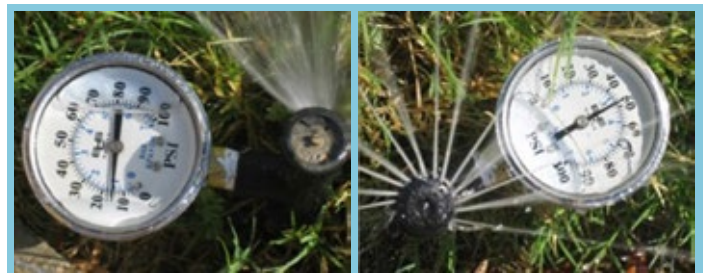
Traditional spray heads put water out faster than our soil absorbs, causing flooding that leads to runoff. Evapotranspiration is another issue; any wind and the smaller droplets blow away and don't fall where you want them.

Driplines apply water at point locations that result in uneven water distribution and require overwatering at the emission point.

## Check the Water

Assess the quality of water as well as the system pressure and flow. Poor water quality will clog components. Low pressure reduces flow and inhibits product performance. High pressure increases flow and creates misting and fogging.

A mainline filtration system refines the water at the source. Secondary filtration is always necessary for projects with drip; installing a Flow Indicating Basket Filter is a compact solution that provides flow measurement, filtration, and pressure regulation to help make drip maintenance easier.



*Left: Older spray system with low pressure.*

*Right: MP Rotator upgrade for increased pressure at the heads.*