

The Battle of Trees Versus Turf

There may be a battle brewing in your turf areas between your trees and your grass. Trees and turf tend to be mutually exclusive-you won't see many trees growing in the prairies or grasslands and grass is uncommon on the forest floor.

Our urban landscapes represent an unnatural ecosystem in which we force two somewhat incompatible plant types together and expect optimum performance from each. Trees and turf compete for sunlight, water, mineral nutrients, and growing space below ground. Turf roots typically out-compete tree roots and win the below-ground battle. But the dense shade of a tree's crown can be too much competition for turf, enabling trees to win the aerial war. Shade leads to reduced grass density, increased root competition, and increased weed invasion.

We see this all the time in a lot of our large turf areas that have had trees planted in the turf on the slopes. We are now adding watering issues to the mix. The lower areas are too wet or the slopes dry out and the grass dies out under the trees and then here comes the weeds.

The adjacent box lists some of the ways that we try and address the cohabitation issues of turf and trees with our landscape maintenance.



Some of the ways that you can help Trees and Turf get along!!

Pruning for light Penetration:

- Thinning the Canopy
- Raising the Crown
- Be careful no more than 35% tree reduction at any one trimming, this can promote suckers.

Root Control:

- Can be done but can cause severe damage to a tree. Since roots grow back, this is not a long term solution.

Mulch:

- Remove the turf out from under the tree and use tree mulch.
- Mulch helps conserve water, and is the best source of fertilizer for a tree.

Mowing and String Trimmer Damage:

- Use tree guards on young trees to help protect them
- Use kill rings on larger trees around the base of the tree.

Achieving a Balance:

Trees and turf can peacefully coexist and even thrive in a landscape. Armed with an understanding of how each affects the other, we can modify the environment and the maintenance procedures to optimize the growing conditions for both.

All of the information in this article was taken from the ISA web site. Article called The Battle of Trees Versus Turf.

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