



INVASION!

No, it's not al-Qaida or aliens. With the dry spell we are currently experiencing, many poor, little beasties are having a hard time finding water. Thirst will drive them to desperate actions. Like invading your nice, comfy, un-occupied house. I am mainly speaking of mice and rats. There are others, of course, such as ants, ladybugs and scorpions, Oh My!

Recently, we have had clients report minor mouse problems. What we found at a few homes was nothing short of a full scale take-over! One of the infestations was so massive they had a public transit system in place. Mice can do it but we cannot?

The first step is to establish some control over the situation. Well placed snap traps are the best option. I know many like to reach for the bag-o-poison. While this can also prove very effective, if you've ever had a mouse or rat die in the wall you know you might not be able to use that part of your house for a while, unless you have a respirator handy.

The next step is to find where they are coming in... and then to properly seal said opening. This is very important as prevention is always easier than trying to get rid of the pest once they have established a pathway in. Did you know that no matter how big and bloated a rat's body is, they can fit through any hole their head can fit through? The tiny little mice that are the biggest problem 'round these here parts are even worse. They can squeeze through the smallest of openings and can be very difficult to expel. Like ants, mice and rats leave behind a scent trail so they (and their legion of brethren) can find their way in later.

So if you suspect an invasion in your abode, take the appropriate measures. Or call Complete Home Services and we'll repel the invaders, block their egress and return your home to it's original pristine state. If you dawdle, the picture below aptly demonstrates what the result can be!!!

This is a slide out hide-a-bed so they had a little hidey hole in which to make their nest. I'm not exactly sure what the stain is comprised of. It appears to be blood and urine. Perhaps some of the little pinkies didn't make it and were dragged out of the nest to atrophy on the mattress pad. The stain is approx. 2 ft. x 1 ft. A spot like this can necessitate a mattress replacement. Security checks in times of extended absence can prevent such occurrences.



A couple of newsletters back I made mention of the fact that plants need water and if you had Complete Home Services do any landscaping for you in the recent past, you needed to water those plants.

Well, things have gotten decidedly worse. While some microcosms of the local area have received some rain most have not. In my pastures the soil is cracked in some places with die-off in my grass. The trees in some places up here are beginning to show signs of stress and leaf wilt.

As some of these trees have been in place for a decade (or ten) with deep, involved root systems, you can imagine how stressed smaller plants are. We have witnessed some plant death due to lack of water, both in general and at some client's property.

Ideally, plants should receive 1 inch of water per week. For longevities sake, plants should receive infrequent, deep watering. This encourages deep rooting and the plant can tap into sub-surface water easier, making it less prone to drought damage. Frequent, shallow watering can result in equally shallow rooting and an increased dependence on the water you provide.

Since your lawn is comprised of many plants, the same holds true. If you can picture in your mind's eye (work with me now) as you look out across your lawn, the height of the grass is a direct representation of the depth of the root system. When you mow your grass, parts of the root system dies off to reflect the decreased need for water and nutrients by the above ground growth. In times of dry conditions you, and your lawn, would be better served by leaving some height on your grass. I know this may seem counterintuitive (if it's taller won't it use more water?) but after years of learning how to be a grass farmer I can tell you, cutting your lawn like a golf green will require copious amounts of water or result in lifeless brown patches that will cost \$\$\$ to get re-established.

While we certainly understand that most of you are absentee home owners and can't drop everything and drive up to water some plants, they do represent real costs to plant and establish and they cost to replace as well. If you can, make a deal with family, friends or neighbors to water your plants occasionally. Of course you can always call your friendly neighborhood Complete Home Services office (currently only 1) and have us put you on a schedule of minimal watering to prevent die off. It's certainly less costly than replacement.

A Note for Our Rental Cabin Clients

Don't ya just hate it when a guest calls up at the last minute and cancels a stay? Or they wait until the night before scheduled check-out and they call and ask for a late check-out? And you have a guest checking in that day!

We are aware that these things happen all the time. Plans can change due to injury or illness and let's face it, sometimes things just happen. If someone cancels and there's no hurry to clean on your scheduled day, please let us know. And if you book a new client or you decide to come up, let us know ASAP and we will make sure to have your cabin ready. For us, a little leeway is nice to have. Things always "pop up", threatening our tight, tidy schedule. We can't fall victim to procrastination, because no one wants to stay in a cabin that hasn't been cleaned since the last renter slept there!

To facilitate proper scheduling of cleanings, for example, **we schedule a full week in advance**. Please bear this in mind when thinking of calling us for a cleaning.

So be sure and keep us in the communication loop so we have the time necessary to properly schedule and complete the job so everyone is happy... especially YOU!

Of Deserts and Swamps...

Well, after the last two months of drought conditions here, Tropical Storm Irene has seemingly brought an end to our blight of choking dust. You couldn't drive down a gravel road (or my driveway) without it looking like a Saharan sandstorm. The soil in my pastures, as well as nearly everyone's, has cracked from lack of moisture. The grass that was worthy of bragging rights in the early summer has stalled and even began to turn brown. Some pastures in the area looked burned, as if caught afire.

Sunday evening the remnants of Irene started easing in and dropping scattered showers. The gently falling rain was welcomed by the parched ground which greedily gulped it like a drowning man gasps for oxygen. For the better part of Monday there was virtually no run-off. As the day progressed the rain ebbed and flowed as does the tide. Come the evening, however, intense cells passed over that were shedding about 2"+ per hour. Come morning there was 5.3" of rain in the rain gauge.

Monday evening while doing my daily cattle walk and checking the creek that flows throughout the pastures, I noticed my warning strobe was flashing. It sits on the electric fence and monitors line voltage and begins to flash when said voltage drops. I walked over to the creek only to see the water just passing over the bottom line of a three wire fence that crosses the creek. Leaves, small branches and other such debris were gathering on the line creating resistance to the passing water. To prevent damage I cleaned the debris from the line to ease the passage of the rising water. I also had to dig a couple of small trenches to drain a particularly low spot in the pasture. Everything looked okay and I headed for the house.

The next morning I received a call notifying me that the pulse light on the charger wasn't blinking, indicating a short on the line. Boots on feet and fence tester in hand I arrived only to discover that the extreme rains overnight had been a bit worse than previously believed. At the afore mentioned crossing, all 3 lines were now coated in the same kind of debris I had removed the evening before. This indicated the creek had risen an additional 4 - 5 feet! The water leapt from the banks and flowed across several pastures. Being as I have new calves I had to do a head count to insure no one had washed downstream. In addition, I had just completed several projects (stream bank repair, water crossings, etc.) to satisfy a NRCS grant and needed to make sure all of that work hadn't washed away as well.

Besides a few new ruts in the pasture and on the side of the road, all is well. We have been visualizing rain for the entire summer and had even considered initiating a rain dance or two. Now, as summer draws to a close, the rain is starting to return, even if only in sporadic bursts and sprinkles. Mother nature can be a fickle mistress indeed! But if everything were perfect, how boring would that be? The old axiom says, "A dry year will scare you to death but a wet year will starve you to death." True, indeed!

...a note from Cindy

Fall is slowly creeping into the North Georgia Mountains. The dogwoods are beginning to turn which signals leaf change is about to begin. Every year peak season is a little different due to the summer's temperature and precipitation. So, it is always a challenge to determine when the peak color will arrive. Check out the following website from the forest service, www.fs.usda.gov, and they will begin posting the leaf color change as it progresses. Leaves are one of those things which are beautiful, crunch under foot when you hike and create that wonderful fall scent. But... they can be slippery when wet, suffocate your lawn and plants and fill your gutters. So, after you have enjoyed the beauty of fall, attempt to get those leaves removed as soon as possible to prevent injury and property damage. In addition, they are much easier to remove sooner than later. Additionally, leaves make excellent mulch. You can also compost them and add them around plantings or to next year's garden space where they will add invaluable organic matter to the soil!

Conversely, you can always depend on Complete Home Services to provide for all of your landscaping needs!

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Questions or comments? E-mail us at donald@gamtnhome.com or call 678-439-9125

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