

# Florida fires devastate trees

**PALM COAST, FL**— Employees of White Acres Nursery & Garden moved their landscape equipment into an open field and turned on the irrigation to keep the equipment from burning. At their Palm Coast branch they even filled their 700-gallon lawn spray trucks with water to ward off flames. "The fire came right up to the edge of our business," said a company spokesman.

Wild fires devastated over 400,000 acres in Florida, mostly timberland, in June and early July. A lot of the damage occurred in northeastern Florida where, just before the busy July 4 holiday, the entire population of Flagler County (just north of Daytona Beach) was evacuated because of wind-blown fires.

When people were allowed to move back into their homes and tend their businesses more than 40 homes had been destroyed, and, perhaps 10 times that many had been damaged. Landscapes, both trees and turf, also suffered.

"A lot of trees were burned close to people's home and they have to be removed," Danny Barrett of Big Dan's Tree Service, Ormond Beach, tells Landscape Management. In one subdivision alone, Barrett reports taking down about 250 trees because the fire was so hot it burned into the dried muck beneath them. Statewide

Florida reported its driest June in 119 years which contributed to the wildfires.

"If it weren't for the firefighters my wood lot (at the intersection of U.S. 1 and I-95) would have burned," says Barrett.

"A lot of trees will probably recover if we keep getting rain. A lot of trees will come out of shock, but a lot of the pines are gone," says Barrett who's been putting in 12-hour days. Those not imme-

diately destroyed, but severely stressed, will eventually succumb to beetles and other pests.

"A lot of the large specimen trees may refoliate," speculates Bret Bartlett of Bartlett Landscape in Palm Coast, one of the hardest hit communities. "A lot of the palms should refoliate too, but it's going to take several years. But there's going to be a lot of foundation plantings and a lot resodding because

the fires went right up the foundations of houses in some areas."

Also, some landscapes were destroyed when firefighters used bulldozers in some areas to clear firebreaks.

"The real scare happened over a three-day period. We shut down and had to leave the county," says Bartlett who tells Landscape Management that the fires generated incredible amounts of smoke and falling ash for days on end.

## Montana State starts turf program

**Bozeman, MT**— Students can enroll in a new Turfgrass Science option at Montana State University here this fall, thanks, in large part, to a recent addition to the MSU horticulture staff.

Ten students are enrolled in the turfgrass program, with about eight more expected this fall, says Rob Golembiewski, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of Horticulture. The MSU board of regents approved the program in July. It is being promoted to prospective students through groups like the Peaks & Prairies Golf Course Superintendents and the Association of Montana Turf & Ornamental Professionals, both of which have contributed financial support too. Other young people learn of the program through high school career fair days.

The program is significant to cool-season turfgrass research for several reasons, not the least of which is geography. The nearest other significant turfgrass programs are at Colorado State, Utah State or Washington State.

Dr. Golembiewski, Montana State U's only turfgrass expert, will offer courses in Introductory Turfgrass Management, Advanced Turfgrass Management, and Turfgrass Pest Management. Turf students will also take numerous horticulture courses along with small engine instruction.

A new three-acre turfgrass research farm is under construction too. It will be the location of NTEP bentgrass putting green and fairway trials along with NTEP fine fescue trials. Other work that's already underway at MSU includes: snow mold and fairy ring fungicide evaluation trials, and a creeping speedwell herbicide trial.

"Upon completing my Ph.D. last year, I never thought I would have the opportunity to go and build a turfgrass program," Golembiewski tells LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT. "It can be a very solid turfgrass program."

Golembiewski said many people and companies generously contributed both time and supplies to make the program and, particularly, the three-acre research farm a reality.

"The establishment of this farm is an excellent example of how university, industry and turf associations work together to achieve goals never thought possible," said Golembiewski. "This farm will always be an example of how truly unique the turfgrass industry is."

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