

What is Happening to Our Lantanas?

ELS Maintenance, Inc.



Temperatures have been on the rise in recent weeks, hitting triple digit numbers here in the valley nearly every day. With this time of the year bringing in excessive heat and very little rain to cool our landscape down, certain plants are feeling the burn. One plant in particular that is suffering some consequences of these high temperatures, reflective heat, and little rain is the Lantana plant, commonly found here in the desert planted along sidewalks and roadways to beautify the area.

What are Lantanas?

Lantanas are evergreen plants that are part of the broadleaf variety and are often classified as shrubs. These plants are perennial and commonly found here in Arizona as they can survive on very little moisture and overly abundant sun.

Lantanas should receive at least six hours of sun a day and most plants of the Lantana species thrive in hotter temperatures such as that of Arizona.

There are about 150 species of Lantana. Here in the desert, we most often find the following species:

L. Montevicensis: Also known as "Trailing Lantana" or "Weeping Lantana." This plant is a low shrub that often takes the form of a vine offering flat groundcover. This species of lantana is strongly scented and can be differentiated from other lantana plants by its oval shaped leaves.

Lantana Camara: Also known as "Big Sage" or "Wild Sage," this species is quite small and contains clusters of tubular shaped flowers that come in a variety of colors. The colors of the flowers typically change after pollination and range from red, yellow, and orange to white and pink.

Why Are Lantanas Burning?

Lantanas are often planted near sidewalks and roadways as a means of beautifying an area. Due to their location many of these plants are seeing significant sunburn from their surroundings as they experience the effects of heat reflection (especially when plants are separated, rather than planted in large groups). As temperatures rise to the triple digits and stay there, the heat that hits the reflective surfaces of pavement, granite, walls, and roadway is being directly reflected back on to the Lantanas planted near it. This causes the plant to overheat and suffocate as the plant burns due to the direct heat. Sunburn and lack of water effects typically look similar on the Lantana plant, however a quick probe into the soil can verify that water is not the issue.



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Healthy Lantana planted in grouping reaches 83 Degree Temperature
(Photo taken at 8am)

Sunburnt Lantana planted individually reaches 116 Degree Temperature
(Photo taken at 8am)



What can we do to Keep our Lantanas Healthy?

Many people believe that the key to preventing burn on Lantanas is to increase the amount of water it's given. While consistent watering is important to support your Lantana through the summer, excess water left on the plants can enhance the effects of heat reflection and make your Lantanas more susceptible to burn. It is important to be sure not to overcompensate with too much water to ensure that the plant survives. Watering on a normal schedule will ensure that the plants do not become too wet and attract the reflective sunlight.

Another popular myth to be debunked is that cutting down the plants will help Lantanas survive the burn of the summer heat. This theory is another misunderstanding as cutting the already burnt parts of the plant down exposes more of the plant and causes a deeper burn. Instead of chopping Lantanas, we should prioritize giving them the proper amount of water and letting the burnt parts of the plant grow out, saving the base of the plant in the process.

Lantana plants suffering burns in the Arizona desert will be able to fully recoup and survive the heat so long as they are not interfered with. As the heat reduces in the coming weeks, we will see Lantanas return to their thriving state and continue to beautify our desert home. This is when plant health can be assessed as to whether or not the plant should be removed (if it's not growing back) or if a proper prune will suffice.

Let's talk more about how you can maintain the investment in your landscape and improve its value. Call the ELS business development team at anytime or contact your area manager for more information.

-The ELS Maintenance Team



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