



# Worldwide Newsletter

Issue 23

December 2007

## Welcome

Welcome to our festive season edition of the Ambius Worldwide Newsletter.

This time of year is often one of reflection and looking ahead, something we hope to achieve in this issue.

We start by dispelling some myths surrounding the care of interior plants, particularly to with watering and pest management.

Ambius has recently won some awards, both for interior landscaping and also for our recent re-branding project. Find out more on page 2

Finally, we round up with some new year's resolutions, for us as interior landscapers and also for the people that use our customers' buildings.

## What's inside?

Ambius wins awards	2
Interior landscaping myths Pt. 2: pest management	3
New Year's resolutions	4

## Interior landscaping myths. Part 1: watering

**Watering is the most important aspect of interior plant care. It is a subject that generates more controversy than any other in our industry. This is because there are dozens of methods of applying water and a huge number of other variables to consider. One thing is certain, however. Over watering interior plants is the number one reason for their decline and early death.**

**Here are some common myths about watering plants and the reasons why you should ignore them.**

### **Interior plants must be watered weekly.**

This is clearly nonsensical. The watering needs of interior plants are dictated by a huge number of interrelated factors such as temperature, light, the physical and chemical nature of the growing medium and, most importantly, plant species. Plants that are direct planted into a large volume of compost and using a subterranean irrigation system can easily last 3 - 4 week watering intervals and often longer.

### **Top watering is more natural than using subterranean irrigation.**

On the surface, this sounds reasonable. However, when one examines what really happens in nature it will be seen that this too is a myth. In the wild, rain falls and passes down the soil profile much quicker than the plant roots can take it in. This means that most of the water sits in a damp zone of the soil somewhere below the plant. This is why plant roots grow downwards. Subterranean irrigation replicates nature more precisely as the systems deliver water direct to the plant roots under the plant.



### Subterranean irrigated plants need additional water during the summer.

Unless the plant is a very high water user, placed in a hot, well-lit area and is fitted with a system that is too small, then this is simply not true. A properly set-up irrigation system will deliver just the right amount of water to the plant's roots in even the most extreme situations. The most sophisticated systems, such as the CWI product can regulate the amount of water released into the soil according to the demands of the plant.

### Top watering is quicker than using an irrigation system.

This is not true in most circumstances. Experiments have shown that the time it takes to deliver enough water to a plant to last 3 weeks (typically 3 - 4 litres) is less when filling a subterranean irrigation tank than top watering and waiting for the water to soak in. Where plants are not direct planted, but kept in a grow pot and staged in a saucer (as is typical in North America), it is often not physically possible to provide 3 litres of water in one go without flooding the saucer and decorative container.

Top watering has two further disadvantages. Firstly, it compacts the soil, squeezing out air and reducing the amount of oxygen that can get to the roots. Secondly, it creates just the right environment for fungus gnats (sciarid flies). These flies require damp soil to breed, but can only breed in the top few centimetres of the soil. Plants that use subterranean irrigation tend to have a dry layer of soil at the surface, which discourages fungus gnats from settling and breeding.

## Ambius wins awards

### Ambius re-branding wins an award.

On 28th November, a delegation from **Ambius** and FST marketing (the company's marketing agency) attended the 2007 CorpComms (Corporate Communications) Awards in London. **Ambius** won the award in the **Best Rebranding Exercise** category, which was collected by Michelle Rodwell (centre). **Ambius** faced some strong competition: other shortlisted businesses included the Association of Accounting Technicians and the Home Group.



The judges found the launch of the new brand to be a 'perfect example', as it was rolled out to 2,500 colleagues and 80,000 customers around the world. They also said that **Ambius** 'used imagery intelligently to tell its story' and showed 'excellent attention to detail'.

### Ambius UK wins interior landscaping awards.



The annual awards ceremony of the European Federation of Interior Landscape Groups (eFIG) took place in Sheffield, England in October. Ambius won two prestigious awards: a Gold award for Design and Installation of a scheme at a biosciences R&D building in the South of England (left) and another for the ongoing maintenance of an interior landscape in Aberdeen, in the Northeast of Scotland. Ambius UK's 'Plant Doctor', Paul Sturgess, also won a lifetime achievement award in recognition of his huge contribution to design and education in the British interior landscaping industry.



## Interior landscaping myths. Part 2: pest management

**Next to watering, the issue of pest management on interior plants is the subject most prone to mythology and misunderstanding. Here are a few commonly held beliefs and misconceptions and how to debunk them.**

### **Fungus gnats bite.**

This is a very common complaint, and entirely false. Whenever fungus gnats are seen, people complain of insect bites, which they assume are caused by the gnats. Whilst fungus gnats are irritating, especially as they tend to fly at head height, they are incapable of biting human skin. Adult fungus gnats have very simple mouth parts that are only suitable for supping a little liquid and grazing on soft algae.

The causes of the 'bites' that people complain of might be small burns caused by static electricity, bites from other insects (such as fleas or ticks) or may be completely delusory.



### **The only way to deal with insect pests is with chemicals.**

This misconception is most widely held in those countries where legislation on the use of chemicals is relatively lax. It is true that chemicals can provide a quick and easy treatment, but they are certainly not the most effective method of dealing with the problems of pests, and they are not the most environmentally friendly.

In many countries, the use of chemical pesticides on interior landscapes is prohibited or severely restricted, yet problems caused by pests are no higher than in countries where pesticides are permitted. In many instances, the problems are actually diminished. Prevention, cleaning, grooming and pruning are extremely effective methods of keeping almost all pests under control. The use of the natural enemies of pests (biological control) is also useful under certain circumstances.

### **Washing-up liquid, methylated spirits and vegetable oils are acceptable methods of pest control.**

It is true that these products are effective at keeping some pests under control, their use in most countries for this purpose is illegal. This is because no-one has ever tested them for safety or efficacy and long-term environmental effects and no-one has ever invested the time or effort to get such products approved for use as interior landscape pesticides (or even for use as a home garden pest control product). The illegal use of such substances for the purposes of pest control could land you in serious trouble - large fines and even prison sentences are possible penalties.



# New Year's resolutions

**As one year comes to a close and we look forward to 2008, many of us will be making some new year's resolutions. Everyone has hopes that their resolutions will last longer than the leftover turkey and Christmas cake, although this is not always the case.**

Here are some resolutions for interior landscapers, which we hope will be quite durable ...

- If an irrigation system is fitted, we will use it.
- If soil levels have dropped, we will top up with fresh soil - not top dressing materials.
- We will avoid all unnecessary use of chemical pesticides and ensure that plants are kept clean and green in the most environmentally-friendly way possible.
- We will ensure that you are informed as soon as is practicable if someone other than your usual service technician is going to care for your plants.
- We will make recommendations for the updating of your plant displays to ensure that you always have the opportunity to have the latest interior landscaping designs.

And here are some for the people who work in our customers' buildings ...

- We will not pour our left-over coffee, tea or soft drinks into the plant containers as we don't want to encourage fungus gnats, bad smells or dying plants.
- We will not use our plant displays as goal posts, hat stands or litter bins.
- We will not move our plants into dark offices and not tell anyone.
- We will not express anger or surprise when plants that have been surreptitiously moved into dark offices or unheated spaces start to die.
- We will try to give more than a few hours notice if we close our offices and move elsewhere.

We wish all of our readers our best wishes for  
a happy and prosperous 2008

## Contributions Please!

Contributions are welcome from our readers around the world. If you don't have time to write at length, send us brief notes or telephone us and we'll prepare an article for you.

Remember, if you want a swift reply to a tricky technical question, send an e-mail to the editor and we will do our best to answer it.

## Contact information

Editor: Kenneth Freeman  
E-mail: [kenneth.freeman@ambius.com](mailto:kenneth.freeman@ambius.com)  
Address: **Ambius**  
9 Glengall Business Park  
Glengall Road  
London. SE1 5AN  
United Kingdom  
Telephone: +44 (0) 7789 273478  
Web: [www.ambius.com](http://www.ambius.com)