



EARLY
SPRING

INVESTING IN YOUR LANDSCAPE IS ONLY NATURAL

Have you ever considered what it would take to replace the plantings in your landscape? For example, picture a full-grown oak or magnolia. It would be very difficult and costly to find a suitable substitute if either one was lost. However, each will continue adding value to your property with the right care.



You can't go wrong by investing in your landscape, especially when you think in terms of curb appeal. Studies show that a well-maintained and designed landscape can add as much as 15% to the selling price of a home.

With that in mind, it makes sense to do whatever you can to prevent tree and shrub decline and promote good plant health. Properly cared for, your trees and shrubs will definitely improve with age, and some can last for generations.

It's an investment worth making, and from an environmental standpoint, everyone can benefit!



Crackdown on Crabgrass

MANAGING A REPEAT LAWN OFFENDER

Crabgrass is very common in home lawns due to its tremendous reproductive capabilities. Just one crabgrass plant can produce thousands of seeds, and these seeds can remain in the soil for many years before sprouting. Since crabgrass is so prolific, eradicating it completely is unrealistic. Instead, successful control must rely on preventative measures.

IT'S A FACT: DENSE, HEALTHY TURF HAS LESS CRABGRASS



The thicker your turf is, the harder time crabgrass will have getting established in your lawn. Your lawn can be made less hospitable to crabgrass through:

Regular Mowing – It's important to mow often enough so that no more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the grass blade needs to be removed at a time. Longer grass blades shade the soil, helping to discourage crabgrass seed germination.



Deep Watering – Frequent, light sprinkling should be avoided since this will promote a shallow root system and less hardy turf. Instead, it's best to irrigate deeply, letting the water penetrate 6" deep. This will encourage a deeper root system and a more robust stand of grass.



Proper Fertilization – Providing your lawn with the proper nutrients in the right doses will promote thicker, healthier growth. This will help to crowd out crabgrass plants.

Insect and Disease Controls as Needed – Left untreated, insects and diseases can do major damage to your lawn, thinning out your turf and leaving more room for crabgrass plants to grow.

PRE-EMERGENT HERBICIDES OFFER ADDED INSURANCE

As their name implies, pre-emergent herbicides prevent crabgrass plants from emerging in the first place. They work by killing off any would-be crabgrass plants soon after their seeds germinate. Pre-emergents won't work if they aren't applied prior to seed germination, though, so it's important to make sure they're on your lawn before crabgrass grows. Plus, since there will always be crabgrass seeds trying to grow in your lawn, yearly applications are necessary for ongoing control.

Also, keep in mind that pre-emergents will stop good grass seeds from growing too. Therefore, you should wait six to eight weeks after a pre-emergent application if you want to reseed your lawn.

With a one-two punch of good lawn care practices and pre-emergent herbicide applications, your turf will be much less likely to suffer a crabgrass infestation.

PLANTING PARTNERSHIPS

Have you ever heard of companion planting? The idea behind this concept is that certain plants can be beneficial to others when they're planted close to one another. There are several ways that companion planting can be used in your garden, including:

Pest management. For example, planting marigolds among vegetables is beneficial, since marigolds secrete a biochemical substance from their roots that is lethal to nematodes in the soil (nematodes can be harmful to vegetables).

Nutrient supplementation. Various vegetables, for instance, benefit from beans planted near them. That's because beans can move nitrogen from the air to the soil, and some vegetables (like corn) grow best when they receive plenty of nitrogen.

Improving growing conditions. Plants that grow tall and prefer a lot of sun, for example, can be planted next to low-growing, shade-loving species. The tall plants will help to shade the short ones.

Whether you practice companion planting or not, it's interesting how the mutually beneficial relationships plants have with one another can improve our world!



Spring-Blooming Shrubs Breathe New Life into Winter Landscapes

After a dull, dreary winter, flowering shrubs bursting into bloom can put a spring in anyone's step. There's nothing quite like the sights and smells of spring blossoms after months of cold, gray weather. Even after their color and fragrance fade away, spring-blooming shrubs can contribute to your landscape by providing shade or serving as backdrops for other plantings.



Lilac

If you're interested in adding spring-blooming shrubs to your property, here are some favorites you may want to consider:

Forsythia – Provides yellow blooms in early spring and can reach 10' in height. Prefers full sun to partial shade.

Lilac – Purple, pink, red or white blooms in mid-spring. Prefers full sun and can reach 15' in height.

Mountain Laurel – Blooms in late spring with red, pink or white flowers. Grows up to 15' in height and prefers partial shade.

Rhododendron – Pink, red or white blooms in mid-spring. Grows well in full sun to partial shade and can reach 15' in height.

Beyond these, there are dozens of other choices for getting past winter and moving into spring beautifully!



Forsythia

Raking: It's Not Just for Fall Anymore!

Rakes can be used for more than just leaf removal. In fact, raking your lawn this spring will encourage better early-season green-up and improved growth throughout the summer.

Over the winter, snow mold disease, foot traffic on frozen turf, heavy snow accumulation and even salt used for melting snow can lead to dead, matted patches of turf throughout your lawn. These patches become obvious once the lawn comes out of dormancy in the spring.

The problem with these dead, matted patches is that new grass will have a hard time breaking through, preventing healthy turf from thickening naturally. Plus, dead grass contributes to your lawn's thatch layer. This is the layer of living and dead grass stems, roots and crowns right above the soil. Thatch is a normal and healthy part of a growing lawn, but if it grows to more than ½" thick, it blocks air, water, nutrients and insect controls from the soil. Thick thatch can also serve as a breeding ground for lawn diseases and turf-eating insects.

RAKING LAWN TROUBLES AWAY

An ordinary rake makes the perfect tool for dealing with dead, matted patches in your lawn. The key is not to overdo it. Rather than de-thatching your lawn, the goal is to loosen up the dead patches so that air, water, nutrients and insect controls can more easily reach the soil. This will also help existing turf to fill in the dead areas.

Light raking in various directions will air out the dead spots. Then, any dead grass that accumulates on top of your lawn should be removed. Using a mower with the bag attached is an easy way to do this.

A little raking this spring can make a big difference in your lawn's looks and health. It's a simple way to give your turf a head start on the growing season ahead.

Please note: If pre-emergents have been applied to your lawn, raking will render them ineffective. Any raking should be done prior to pre-emergent applications.

Dormant Oils Leave Pests Breathless

Though they may look healthy and insect-free, your trees and shrubs could be providing a home for some of their worst enemies at this very moment. Even if you can't see any damage taking place, it's possible that insect eggs and/or pupating larvae are posing a very real threat to the health of your landscape plants.

After overwintering in your trees and shrubs, insect pests such as scales, aphids, spider mites and thrips can "come to life" in late winter and early spring to start feeding. If nothing is done to stop them, they can cause serious damage to your trees and shrubs. Dormant oil treatments can provide the protection your valuable plants need.

These are highly refined, light oils that are blended with emulsifiers to allow them to be mixed with water and spread evenly over plant surfaces. Once applied to your trees and shrubs, the oil/water mixture coats the soft bodies and eggs of insect pests. Since most insects use their whole bodies to breathe, the oil/water coating basically seals off their pores and suffocates them.



Healthy-looking trees and shrubs may still be harboring insect pests. Applied in early spring, dormant oils can stop overwintering insects from harming your valuable landscape plants.

Dormant oils are an effective and environmentally friendly method of controlling insect pests, but to work properly they must be applied when temperatures are above freezing and plants are still dormant. Early spring is the perfect time!



Quick Tips FOR EARLY SPRING



- If you have a compost pile, now is the time to turn it. This will aerate and loosen your compost, helping to speed decomposition for earlier use in your garden.
- Chewed leaves, blemishes on bark or fruits, and poor coloration in your trees and shrubs may indicate an insect problem. If you notice these symptoms, be sure to arrange for a professional inspection. Quick action can help to prevent serious damage from occurring.
- When was the last time you had your mower blade sharpened? Remember that dull mower blades can shred the tips of grass blades. This is not only unattractive, but it can make grass more susceptible to fungus diseases.
- Any property looks better with freshly mulched beds. An added benefit to mulch is that it helps to conserve moisture in the soil while decreasing the occurrence of weeds in planting beds.

HONEY PORK TENDERLOIN KABOBS

INGREDIENTS:

½ cup bourbon,
OR 2 tablespoons cider vinegar*
½ cup honey
½ cup mustard
1 teaspoon dried tarragon
3-4 sweet potatoes, cut into 24 one-inch cubes
1 ½ pounds pork tenderloin, cut into 24 one-inch cubes
4 medium-ripe peaches, unpeeled, pitted and quartered
4 green peppers, each cut into 8 two-inch pieces
8 yellow onions, each cut into 4 two-inch pieces
Olive oil, for grilling

COOKING DIRECTIONS:

Mix first four ingredients in a bowl; stir well and set glaze aside. Steam or boil sweet potatoes until crisp-tender.

Thread 3 sweet potato cubes, 3 pork cubes, 2 peach quarters, 4 green pepper pieces and 4 onion pieces alternately onto each of 8 ten-inch skewers.

Brush kabobs with honey glaze mixture. Lightly oil grill. Grill over medium-hot coals for 5 minutes on each side or until thoroughly heated, basting occasionally with glaze.

Serves 4

**Bourbon is optional. Can substitute 2 tablespoons cider vinegar.*

Recipe from TheOtherWhiteMeat.com

