



DON'T FORGET TO MAKE YOUR BEDS!

It's the height of the summer season, and the planting beds on your property can use a little help to preserve their looks and health.

- Shrubs and smaller trees should be pruned to remove dead or damaged limbs and promote a more attractive shape.
- Weeds should be removed by hand pulling or treating with a post-emergent herbicide.
- A layer of mulch should be added if it hasn't been already. This will conserve moisture, reduce weeds, regulate soil temperatures and give your beds a more finished look.

Whether your beds contain ornamental grasses, flowers, shrubs or trees, they'll all respond well to good maintenance practices this summer!

Staying on Top of What's Down Below

THATCH BUILDUP CAN BE HARMFUL TO YOUR LAWN



The thatch layer is a normal part of any lawn. It consists of both living and dead organic materials, including the surface roots, stems and crowns of grass plants. Located on top of the soil and underneath your grass plants, thatch can become a problem if too much is allowed to accumulate.

When the thatch layer gets to be more than ½" thick, it can prevent air, water and nutrients from reaching your lawn's root system. Plus, it can become a home for various types of insects and fungus diseases that can damage and even kill your turf.

TAKING CONTROL OF THATCH

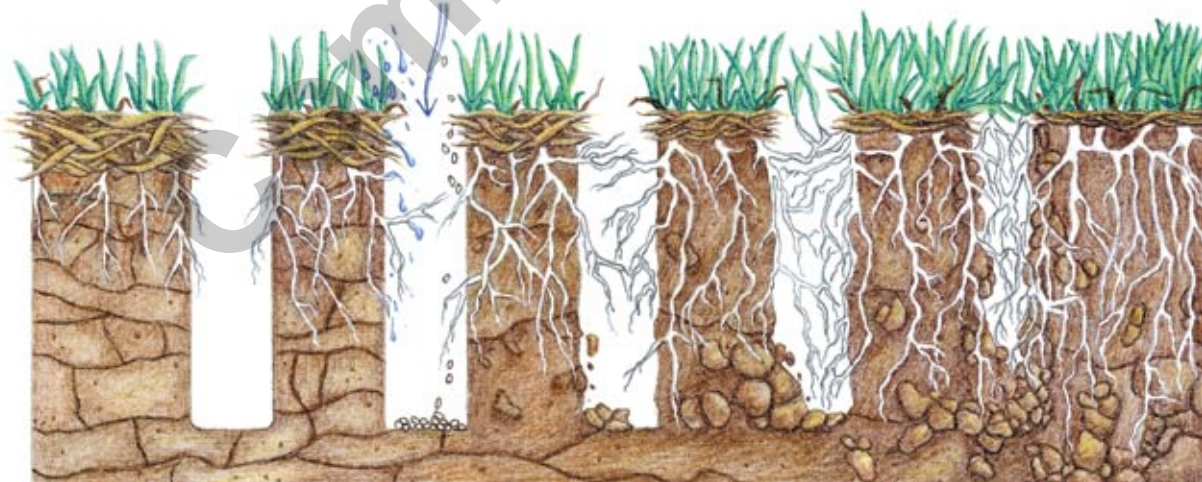
One of the best ways to prevent excessive thatch buildup is to have your lawn aerated. During aeration, plugs of soil and thatch are pulled up from your lawn and left behind to dissolve through rainfall or sprinkling. As the plugs dissolve, they help to speed up the natural decomposition of the thatch layer. Aeration also opens up pathways through which life-giving air, water and nutrients can more easily travel to the roots. Performed annually, aeration will help to keep thatch within acceptable limits while strengthening the root system.

WHEN AERATION ISN'T ENOUGH

If a lawn is very damaged or has an excessively thick layer of thatch, one remedy is to slice seed. With this process, a slice-seeding machine cuts open the thatch, mixes soil with it and plants seed directly into the soil beneath. Another solution is to have the lawn dethatched with a power dethatcher. This equipment uses angled blades to pull the thatch up out of the lawn. After dethatching, the loosened thatch must be raked up and removed.

Remember, in moderation, thatch is a normal and healthy part of any growing lawn. Annual core aeration, along with slice seeding or dethatching if necessary, will go a long way toward keeping thatch under control.

FAST FACT:
Aeration is one of the best ways to control thatch.



YOU "MITE" HAVE A PROBLEM IF...

Measuring less than $\frac{1}{50}$ ", spider mites are hard to see with the naked eye. Red, green, orange, brown or black in color, they have oval-shaped bodies and four pairs of legs.

These pests commonly feed on evergreen foliage, damaging plant cells in the process. Damaged areas have small, light flecks, leading to an overall speckled appearance. In severe infestations, leaf discoloration becomes so extensive that the plant can take on an overall gray or bronze look. Leaves and needles may become scorched and drop prematurely. Eventually, plant death can occur.

What Can Be Done?

Spider mites can be controlled with a combination of insecticides and proper care and maintenance (such as regular fertilization and watering) to promote good tree and shrub health. To prevent lasting damage, prompt identification and treatment is essential. If you think you may have a spider mite infestation, a professional inspection is recommended.



Spider mites are hard to see with the naked eye.

Please note: Spider mites can also find their way inside your home through window and door frames, and may be found on house plants or crawling around windowsills. A perimeter treatment of your lawn and the foundation area of your home can help to keep these (and many other insects) outside where they belong.

Automatic sprinkler systems provide the right amounts of water at the right times.

As the Weather Gets Hotter, Don't Forget to Water

Lawns, trees, shrubs and flowers need adequate water to thrive, and the summer months are the time to be especially aware of your landscape's watering needs. Remember that how often plants need to be watered is closely related to how deep their roots are.

YOUR LAWN

During the hotter summer months, your lawn needs from 1" to 1½" of water per week either by rainfall or sprinkling. Soaking your soil to a depth of 6" each time you water, will help your turf's roots to grow deeper and stronger. Try to avoid frequent, shallow sprinklings, which can create shallow roots that dry out more quickly.



YOUR TREES AND SHRUBS

If rainfall is scarce, your trees and shrubs will also benefit from weekly watering. Since their roots are much deeper than your lawn's roots, be sure to soak each area thoroughly. Like with turf, water less often, but deeply. On average, your trees and shrubs need to be watered three times as long as your grass. Pay special attention to recently planted trees and shrubs. They need extra water to support top growth while their roots get fully established.

YOUR FLOWERS

Providing too much or too little water (especially when hot summer weather arrives) can result in less-than-satisfactory blooms. Annuals have shallow roots, so they dry out more quickly. Keep the soil moist, but not too soggy. Perennials need less water since they have deeper roots. Don't worry if the soil dries out a bit between waterings.

If at all possible, watering should be done in the early morning when temperatures are lower (to help prevent water loss from evaporation). An automatic irrigation system may be worth looking into if you have an especially large lawn or lots of plants spread out over a large area. Not only will it save you time and effort, but you'll have peace of mind knowing that your plants are always getting the right amounts of water at the right times!

- Answers to photo puzzle on back page:
1. Flowers have been planted at right.
 2. There are now two bottles of wine.
 3. The planter color is darker.
 4. A pillar has been shortened near walkway and steps.
 5. Potted flowers have been added next to stairs.
 6. A crossbar has been removed on chair legs.
 7. Stone is darker on top of wall seat.

These Poisonous Plants Mean Business!

Plants really are our friends...for the most part. When it comes to poison ivy, oak and sumac, on the other hand, a better term to use would probably be, "frenemies."

Each of these plants releases a toxin known as "urushiol," which causes an itchy, red rash that can last as long as a month. Only a billionth of a gram of urushiol is needed to cause a rash, so it's best to keep your distance. Whether you're gardening or taking a hike in the woods this summer, keep an eye out for the following:

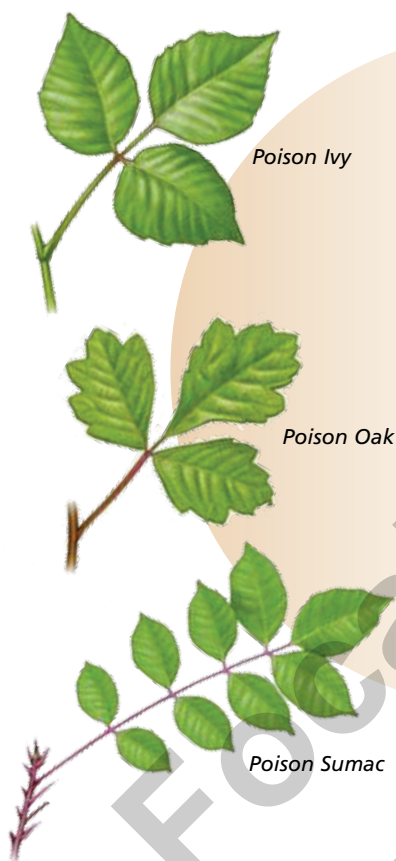
POISON IVY – Perhaps the most well-known of the poisonous trio, poison ivy has three pointed leaves with bumpy edges. The middle leaf has a longer stalk than the ones on the sides. Poison ivy grows as a climbing vine.

POISON OAK – Though it also has three leaves, poison oak can be distinguished from poison ivy because its leaves are lobed (in other words, they have deeply indented margins). Poison oak tends to grow as a shrub, but it can also climb like a vine.

POISON SUMAC – Poison sumac has sharp, compound leaves (or several leaflets attached to the same stalk). It grows as a shrub or small tree in very wet areas and can reach up to 12' in height.

Long sleeves, long pants, gloves and enclosed footwear can help to protect you from these plants and their toxin. Of course, that isn't always practical. If you do think you've come into contact, you should rinse thoroughly with cold water to remove any traces of urushiol. This toxin can bond with your skin in as little as 15 minutes, so the sooner you can rinse it off, the better.

FAST FACT:
Urushiol Can Stay
Active on Any
Surface for up
to 5 Years!



Keep it Colorful with Mums

Chrysanthemums, better known as mums, will keep your garden alive with color through the end of the growing season. Drought-tolerant and resistant to insect pests and diseases, these popular flowers are one of the easiest perennials to grow.

Given the wide array of colors, form and growth habit, there are loads of possibilities with mums. Available in just about every shade but blue, they do best in full sun and rich, well-drained soil. They can be planted anytime during the growing season, but their flowering won't be triggered until the days shorten and nights get longer in the late summer and fall.

Consider planting masses of mums for waves of color throughout your landscape. Or, if space is limited, they can also be enjoyed in containers. Either way, mums are an excellent choice for extending your season of color!



Mums come in many shades
and are very easy to grow.



Guiding Light

Walkways are an essential component of any good landscape design. Carefully planned, they'll make your property more visitor-friendly by providing a clear path from point A to point B. Of course, once the sun goes down, your walkways won't do much good if they aren't properly illuminated.

That's where path lights come into the picture. These low-voltage fixtures are mounted on short stakes and cast pools of light downward, clearly showing the walkway and highlighting any nearby plants or planting beds.

Path lights will make your nighttime landscape safer and easier to navigate for pedestrians. Plus, they can help to discourage would-be intruders who might otherwise lurk along a darkened walkway. With low voltage requirements, path lights are easy on your electric bill. Solar-powered versions are also available as an environmentally friendly, energy-saving alternative.

Even just a few carefully selected and installed path lights can make a big difference in the way you see, enjoy and use your property after dark. No walkway should go without them!



Can You Tell the Difference?

See if you can find the seven differences between the two photos. Answers are on page 2.

