

Personal Message

According to an article I read recently, those winter storms are supposed to produce a stunning spring this year. We'll see. I'm not sure that any springtime display, no matter how beautiful, can atone for the amount of snow we received.

All that snow means several things in the landscaping business. First and foremost, it means that our schedule is way behind.

Landscapers actually do a fair amount of work during the cold weather. We like to trim ornamental grasses in the winter. They die back during cold weather. Trimming helps to rejuvenate them for the spring. However, it needs to be done during the cold weather season or you run the risk of cutting off the tips of the new season's growth.

We also like to do woods restoration work during the winter. This is the process of taking an overgrown wooded area and clearing it into a park like setting. We cut back brush and clear debris. The foliage is off the plant material, so the entire job becomes much more efficient.

There are many types of projects that we couldn't do because of the snow. Now, we're frantically scrambling to complete our "winter work" as well as beginning those all-important spring jobs.

If we're running behind schedule with your project, I hope you'll forgive us. We're working as quickly and efficiently as possible with all of our jobs. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call our office. We'll try to firm up the schedule for you.

By now, you've probably received several pieces of mail about our lawn care program. Our natural/organic lawn care program is about 80% non-toxic. We offer organic insect, fungus and disease controls, combined with our non-toxic fertilizer.

In fact, the only thing we can't control effectively with organic products are weeds. Sometimes, lawns going through the transition from chemically based fertilizers and harsh herbicides need the traditional type of weed control. However, within several years, lawns that were previously subjected to these types of harsh chemicals can be maintained virtually chemically free.

You'll need to expect about a 3-5% weed involvement with our natural/organic program. If you choose to have zero weeds in your lawn, you may need to select a program that uses harsher chemical toxins. However, we no longer offer this type of service.

For a free analysis and estimate of your lawn, please give us a call. We love to discuss the benefits of a natural/organic lawn care program.

April Garden Tips

- Here's a perennial favorite. (Perennial, get it?) Plant your summer flowering bulbs this month. Dahlias, gladiolas and lilies will love to find a home this month. We like to use a spoonful of Bulb Boost for each bulb we install.
- When the blooms are done, deadhead your daffodils and tulips. However, please don't cut the foliage off yet. Leaves actually continue to grow for a few weeks after the bloom is spent. More importantly, they provide the bulb with the necessary nutrients for flowering next year.
- One of our favorite things to do this time of year is to plant. We love to plant seeds, dig holes for bulbs or install newly purchased plant material. Bulbs and plant material can damage your pocketbook quickly.
- Here's a way to get more plant material...for free. Try dividing perennials such as daylilies, iris and chrysanthemums. Black-eyed Susans work well too. You'll create an abundance of new plants that can be moved to that bare spot in your garden. Also, try trading them or giving them away to other gardeners. Plant swaps are lots of fun!

The Just Rewards of Weeding

The task of weeding is arguably the most dreaded and tedious aspect of yard work. (Perhaps second only to raking leaves.)

However, it must be accomplished before weeds get their tenacious foothold in your gardens. Weeds can starve your landscape plants by out-competing them for precious water and nutrients. Weeds also harbor insects and diseases that prey upon your valuable plant material. Young plants are especially vulnerable.

Getting rid of weeds early is important. It helps prevent the spread of weed seeds in the spring that can ruin a garden throughout the growing season. We can help in several different ways.

We offer weeding crews on an as-needed basis, or you can choose to take advantage of our monthly maintenance program. Our monthly maintenance program is unusual...I've never seen one like it. All I know is that it's met with favor by our clients of many years.

Unlike many programs that require a fee, we don't even charge a minimum for our monthly landscaping visit.

In fact, we visit your property before our crews arrive. We'll let you know what we think needs to be done this month, then write it out for you. If you agree, we'll send a crew out to take care of the weeds and other necessary maintenance. Or, you may choose to skip a month and use our service again the following month.

This approach to landscaping helps in several ways. It could save you money in the long run because you won't have a lengthy project that could drag on for several days. Our crews will take care of any problems that have arisen since their last visit, then leave until the next time you need us.

Also, it helps us by knowing how to schedule. Our worst problem is getting into a scheduling jam and not being able to accommodate our regular customers.

Being on our monthly maintenance plan assures you of a spot on the schedule. You'll know that we'll visit your property for a monthly review, then contact you with our suggestions.

Remember, there is no fee and no monthly obligation—just peace of mind and a beautifully landscaped yard.

A Tick Repellent Program that Works!

I write a lot about our tick repellent program because it's a subject I'm passionate about. My family has a troubling medical history associated with tick bites.

Several years ago I was hospitalized when a tick bite became infected. Dad was diagnosed with Lyme Disease about a year ago. He spent several weeks in the hospital and we were fortunate that he lived.

Both of us still have problems, due to the powerful antibiotics that we had to take to combat our problems. Our program was developed because of these health issues.

In this area, the deer tick is the most prevalent. It's smaller than a dog tick, which is prevalent east of the Rocky Mountains and also on the Pacific Coast. Dog ticks cause Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever while the deer tick spreads Lyme Disease.

The bite of a deer tick is apparently fairly painful, although I don't remember being bitten. It's more difficult to remove than a dog tick because its' mouth has tiny barbs which may anchor into the skin. The barbs often remain in the skin causing infection. That's what happened to me. While I only suffered a severe infection, full blown Lyme Disease may cause arthritis-type conditions as well as affecting the heart, liver and lungs.

Deer ticks are normally associated with outdoor activity. Dad is a retired tree surgeon and I'm a landscaper. We both spend a lot of time outdoors.

However, even less strenuous activity, such as a walk in the woods or handling your outdoor pet may bring you in contact with a tick.

My program is designed to keep ticks away from your outdoor "comfort zone." Any area that we spray around your house should remain tick-free.

We now treat dozens of properties with our barrier tick repellent service during these months of frequent activity.

After inspecting your property, we'll identify the areas of activity and recommend our barrier spray treatments there. Barrier sprays are the most effective method of tick control at this time. It is sprayed around your property and concentrated in areas where ticks thrive—brushy areas, woodpiles and even lawns.

We may also suggest placing Damminix tubes around areas where rodents nest.

Damminix tubes are cardboard tubes that contain cotton batting which has been soaked with a pesticide which is deadly for ticks. Squirrels take the cotton material back to their nests to use as bedding. It kills ticks at that site, but doesn't harm squirrels or mice in their nests.

Additionally, brush removal may help clear areas of frequent tick activity. As you might imagine by now, rodent nests are a beehive of tick activity. Nests are usually built in brush areas that we may suggest clearing. Any woodland areas or even landscaped areas with dense ground cover, dead leaves or a heavy concentration of shrubbery may be infested with ticks.

We can clean up woodpiles and other debris quickly and efficiently. We believe in a comprehensive approach toward ridding your property of ticks. Please contact us for a free estimate.