

Garden Tips

- A low-tech tarp is one of the most useful pieces of equipment we use. We throw weeds on it, drag debris away from the job site and use it for transporting heavy plants and shrubbery across lawns. You may find these simple tools really helpful in your garden too.
- This is the time to keep one step ahead of pesky weeds. A good pre-emergent can help reduce the amount of hand weeding needed in the future by as much as 70%.
- Spring is the time to divide and replant perennials. You can add a lot of extra plant material to your garden by dividing your existing foliage.
- Spend time walking over your lawn to remove debris. Pick up rocks, sticks and other items that can pose a danger when mowing the lawn.
- When daffodils and tulips finish blooming, don't cut the stalks back immediately. Leave them until they yellow to store energy for next year.

A Personal Message

We are building an unusual number of vegetable gardens this spring. Melissa and I have always planted a huge amount of vegetables for just the two of us. It seems that others are discovering the rewards of an edible garden.

Vegetable gardens are endlessly fascinating and frustrating. However, there is no feeling in the world that is more satisfying than eating something you've grown yourself. You can start small and work your way up the ladder of crops, limited only by your imagination. During April, we like to plant lettuce, radishes, beets and carrots. Occasionally, we'll experiment with other produce, but these continue to be our faithful standbys.

We can help with the building as well as the installation of your new vegetable garden. We can also tackle some of the hoeing and weeding that goes along with these gardens. Some of the new hybrid vegetables are as beautiful as flowers when they are in full growth. So you may want to think about incorporating some space for vegetables and herbs as well as flowers in your gardens this spring.

That being said, Melissa and I are woefully lacking in gardening space this spring. We have been really wrapped up with repairs and redesign to our new home and office space. We've also completed those crucial repairs to the water and septic systems. Now that we're ready for some fun stuff like gardening, unfortunately, our gardens aren't ready for us.

So, we are planting seeds in large peat pots this season and hope to have some gardening space ready

for ourselves soon.

However, we can always fall back on container gardens for many vegetables as well as most of our herbs. I like to have containers full of dill, basil and rosemary a few steps away from the door. As you probably know cooking is my favorite hobby. Seasoning my dishes with fresh herbs is healthier, tastier and a lot more fun than using the dried variety. If you'd like some practical ideas about container gardening, feel free to give us a call. We'll be glad to let you what's worked for us in the past...and what hasn't worked as well.

You may have been receiving this newsletter unexpectedly during the last several months. We expanded our mailing list temporarily to include some additional neighborhoods. If you're interested in continuing to receive it at no charge, please call our office and make sure that we keep your name on the list.

Lawn Care Speech

I've been given a wonderful opportunity to practice my public speaking this spring. The Talbot County Master Gardeners and the Wilson Reading Garden Committee at the St. Michaels Library have invited me to be a guest speaker at their May meeting.

We'll be discussing natural/organic lawn care...a subject near and dear to my heart. The environmental benefits of natural/organic lawn care are enormous. After years in this business, we have consistently proven that we can provide lush green lawns at prices that are comparable to traditional programs.

Our program uses 100% natural and organic disease and insect controls. The actual fertilizer that we use is also 100% natural and organic. However, our custom-blended fertilizer for the spring now contains a pre-emergent herbicide.

Research with various fertilizer manufacturers has convinced us that this is the most effective method of weed control, especially when combating crabgrass.

We knew that something needed to be done to control crabgrass this year. The growing seasons of 2005 and 2006 were preceded by very warm winters. There was very little snow and minimal freezing. Then, each spring has been colder than normal. These extreme conditions caused an unusual preponderance of crabgrass very early in the season.

To sum it all up, our program is now 80% non-toxic, due to the addition of the pre-emergent herbicide. Although we have been forced to make this compromise, we truly believe our program is now stronger and more effective than ever. We've been offering only natural/organic lawn care for five years now. If you're interested in getting further information about our program, please give us a call for a no-cost, no obligation evaluation of your lawn. Or, consider attending the Master Gardeners program next month.

We'll be at the Conference Room in the St. Michaels Library on Saturday, May 5th from 10:00-12:30. I'll be speaking at 10:30 AM and will be happy to answer any questions you may have at that time.

Tick Control

Last year, a tick bit me. Toxins entered my system and within a week, the right side of my waistline had swollen to twice its' normal size. The skin around the bite became extremely infected with poisons.

A weekend trip to the beach was cut short to rush back to my doctor's office. I went directly from his office to the hospital. They say I was one of the lucky ones. I did not contract Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. I suffered a severe allergic reaction to a bite from a parasite no larger than the head of a pin. Tick incidence in the Mid-Atlantic area is rampant. After my bout with this sometimes-deadly member of the spider mite family last year, I vowed to do something to reduce infestation.

We now offer a barrier tick repellent service. Barrier treatments are the single most effective method of control at this time. The tick repellent is sprayed where ticks thrive - such as brushy areas and woodpiles. Our company offers thorough inspections to determine what species of ticks may be present on your property. Then, we estimate the size of the tick population. We'll tailor a program designed to protect your outdoor areas. But, our integrated approach to tick control doesn't stop there. We work to identify habitation areas. Then, you can choose whether to treat them with repellent or remove the host area entirely.

For example, you'll probably decide to keep your woodpile. However, an area of heavy brush where deer congregate may need to be cleared out. We can help make your woods look like a park with our environmentally friendly, low impact brush mowers.

Brush removal also helps to eliminate mice and other rodents. Their nests are vectors for tick-borne diseases.

Although brush removal is the best and easiest way to deprive ticks of a growing environment, there are other methods available to reduce the incidence of deer. Our natural/organic deer repellent service is just one factor of an integrated approach to tick control. Deer start to avoid the treated plant material and move on to other feeding grounds.

An integrated approach to tick control will help you enjoy the outdoors without worry. Please give us a call for a no-cost, no-obligation evaluation.