

A Personal Message

Although it's still winter, I've got spring on my mind. Let's face it, this is February and it's pretty miserable outside. So, a little springtime day-dreaming is definitely in order.

This is our first newsletter of the New Year and we've got lots to report. I'm looking forward to the warmer weather and getting back outdoors. In fact, we've already begun thinking about lawn care and new landscape gardens. The scent of fresh mulch and the sound of a lawn mower. New plants and leaves emerging on trees. Hurry up spring! Before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to update you on our lives since last year.

My Dad continues to slowly improve after his hospitalization in December. He spent nine days at Easton Memorial Hospital with complications from Lyme disease.

While he was hospitalized, they found he has some pretty serious cardiac problems. He's still being monitored very closely and it's going to take time to get him back to his usual robust good health.

It was a busy Christmas season because I spent lots of time in the hospital and at home with Dad. Then, Melissa and I celebrated our 13th anniversary on New Year's Eve. Our celebration consisted of a fabulous dinner that we prepared at home.

Melissa and I managed to get some time away last month. We went to Ocean City and stayed for several days in our little home there. It's a treat to be at the beach...even in the middle of January. I hoped to get some winter fishing in while we were there, but it was too cold for me to hold a fishing rod in my hands.

We're continuing to run a small crew through this month. We're busy with woods restorations and clean-up projects. Cold weather is the perfect time of year for woods restoration work. Foliage is off the trees and bushes, so everything is delineated. We can work more efficiently because we're unhampered by the leaves and twigs.

Winter storms have caused some damage in this area, so we've been busy cleaning up after Mother Nature.

You've still got another month left to sign up for the Winter Work Discount prices. Remember, your projects don't have to be completed during January or February, just scheduled and on the books. We offer 10% off labor prices on your landscaping work. Unfortunately, we cannot extend the discount to our lawn care program and to our tick and deer repellent services.



February Garden Tips

- We would just love to have some warm days in the garden this month. However, the mid-Atlantic region doesn't take kindly to February gardeners. So, we'll have to content ourselves with some basic clean-up chores.
- One of the best things you can do at this time of year is to cut back your ornamental grasses. February is the perfect time for trimming ornamentals. Trimming shapes the grasses and encourages new growth for the spring. They'll grow to be too unruly, if left to their own devices.
- Seed packages are starting to appear in local nursery centers. Those pictures on the front of the package look very tempting to us about this time of year. However, it's still a bit early to start seeds inside, unless you have a warm greenhouse.
- If you're fortunate enough to receive roses for Valentine's Day, here's the best method for making them last. Make sure your vase is clean. Fill it with lukewarm water. Use the packet of floral preservative that came with your roses... aspirin is not an effective preservative. Pull off leaves that would be underwater. Hold the stems under warm running water and make a new cut at an angle. Be sure to keep roses out of direct sunlight and in a cool area. They'll last much longer.



Landscape Designs

Since the pace of life is a little slower for us right now, I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know more about our design services. For years, I was reluctant to offer designs. It didn't seem to be a good fit for a landscape maintenance company. However, my company's manager has proven me wrong.

Dave Lee has worked for me for several years. His installation work has been impeccable. His design work is stunning, creating visual spaces where there was only emptiness before. Area nurseries have told me that he really knows his plant material well beyond other landscapers.

Dave is a graduate of George Washington University in Landscape Design. His formal training goes back to high school when he took design classes as an elective. He is a rarity in the design world because he designs as well as installs your projects. I also supervise all installation work. And, Dave will always be there on your job.

You can see samples of his work on our website at www.dellsadler.com. I also am the fortunate recipient of Dave's work here at our home offices. The garden in front of our office is stunning, thanks to his careful planning. Photographs of our beautiful gardens are also on the website.



Check out this Website!

I recently spent some time on the University of Maryland's Home and Garden Center website. It's operated in conjunction with the Maryland Cooperative Extension Agency. You can locate them on the Internet at www.hgic.umd.edu.

I visit the site periodically to see what the Maryland Master Gardeners are doing and to find out what new publications are offered. The publications on a wide variety of gardening topics are always hugely informative. And, if you can't find what you're looking for, you can call and actually speak with a live Master Gardener. They have a free hotline set up to answer plant and pest questions. You can reach them at **1.800.342.2507** between the hours of 8 A.M.-1 P.M.

This visit to their website yielded a bonanza of information about soil tests. Try two of their publications entitled "**Soil Test Basics**" and "**Why Test Your Soil?**" Both of these brochures can be viewed on your computer or ordered through the website. A soil test is recommended for your lawn every 3-4 years. The test will give readings on your soil's basic structure such as pH levels, phosphate, potassium and magnesium amounts. Results of this test can help us assess what, if any, nutrients may be needed to improve your soil.

Soil texture is based on the percentage of clay, sand and silt particles are held together in aggregates. The greater the aggregation of soil particles, the greater degree of pore space exists. Here again, pore space is necessary for air and water to reach plant roots.

The brochures continue with detailed information on the chemical composition of soil. With the results of your soil test in hand, we can assist you by making recommendations for the health of your lawn. We pride ourselves on using lawn fertilizers responsibly.

For years, we have been proactive in using natural/organic fertilizer to help reduce runoff into the Bay. Our natural/organic lawn care program also uses compost teas, amended topsoils and pelletized composts to naturally provide nutrients for your soil. We are advocates of conservation techniques such as aeration and proper mowing heights. Our method of lawn care really is a full program, not just trumpeting the fact that we use natural/organic fertilizer.

We'd love to explain our program to you in more detail. Please call us for a no-cost evaluation. We can take a look at your property and provide you with additional information, including several pieces of literature about the program.

