

## Garden Tips

- Plant and seed catalogs are coming fast and furious, thanks to the efforts of the U. S. Post Office. There's nothing more tempting than to order one of everything in an effort to hurry the warmer weather. Location is a key factor to a successful garden. Don't put shade loving plants in a sunny spot. And, make sure that you have enough space allocated for plant material. Remember that vines can take more space than you may have available. Consider a colorful climber like clematis that grows upward on a trellis for a tight spot.
- If you have ornamental grasses in your landscaping, cold weather is the time to trim them. Trimming helps to shape them and encourages new growth for next season.
- Spring You may need to add a protective cover of mulch to certain valuable perennials to minimize fluctuations in soil

## A Personal Message

It's really good to be writing this newsletter once again. We always take a hiatus during the month of January because, let's face it, there's generally not a whole lot that needs to be done out of doors that month. This winter has really been surprising weather-wise. Remember the spring-like temperatures last month? It hit 70 degrees one day and it felt so much like springtime that I couldn't stay inside.

It's a bit more moderate now, but my crews have been steadily working this winter. We're busy cleaning up yards, trimming ornamental grasses and doing lots of woods restoration work. We're continuing to offer our 10% discount on all labor through this month. Please remember that the discount does not apply to lawn installations or our deer repellent service. You don't need to have the work completed this month, just scheduled and on the books.

I'd like to take a moment to let you know just exactly what woods restoration work entails. In a nutshell, we can take an overgrown wooded area and turn it into a park-like setting.

We use low-impact, hand-driven brush mowers that are environmentally friendly. They operate similarly to a bush-hog, but without some of the scarring effects. These mowers are terrific for use near a shoreline and assist us in mowing down brush up to 1" in diameter. Additionally, we can cut down larger brush, pull vines from trees and generally transform a tangled mess into an area that is fit for walking or hiking. If you are considering such a project, contact us for further information. We're experts in taking overgrown lots and restoring them into more usable and manageable wooded areas.

This winter continues to see improvements to our new property in St. Michaels. With all the recent rainfall in this area, we are grateful that we have been able to hook into the town's water and sewer lines. Our septic system was antiquated and unable to accommodate our needs.

We are also starting to plan the renovation of our outdoor areas here in St. Michaels. Our first step will be building a white fence. After that, we can plan for the trees and plants we want to install. Melissa and I have a VERY small space for our personal gardens. However, my Dad gave me a really interesting book for Christmas entitled "Square Foot Gardening." by Mel Bartholomew. We may have only be able to grow a square foot of lettuce, another of tomatoes and so forth, but we'll still be able to enjoy gardening in our new home.

### **Natural/Organic Lawn Care Program Revamped This Year**

2007 marks our 5th year of natural and organic lawn installation and treatment programs. Each year, we offer new and improved services. These new services allow us to offer a competitively priced lawn care program on a natural/organic level. We draw upon our research from previous years. We work with national companies to improve seed and fertilizer mixtures. We review new equipment which may allow us to work more efficiently and thus, pass the cost savings on to you. Most importantly, we strive for a level of service and quality that you want and deserve while maintaining a natural/organic program.

As you probably realize, temperatures in our area seem to be getting warmer recently. The last two years have seen warmer winters with very little snow and minimal freezes. Scientists call it global warming which means the surface temperatures of the earth are rising. In our context, it means that soil temperatures do not fall below freezing as they once did. And this leads to a proliferation of weeds, specifically crabgrass.

The growing seasons of 2005 and 2006 were preceded by very warm winters. Then, each spring has been colder than normal. These extreme conditions caused an unusual preponderance of crabgrass very early in the season.

These conditions also caused a delay in our tall fescue during seed germination. Grass seed has to out-compete crabgrass for a place in your lawn. It has become almost impossible to determine when to apply our natural crabgrass deterrent when it is needed.

The Maryland Turfgrass Council has stated that, "Without a doubt, crabgrass remains the single most invasive weed we face in the turfgrass industry today." Since each individual plant produces thousands of seeds, crabgrass growth is a huge problem for a natural/organic lawn.

With this explanation in mind, we are (somewhat reluctantly) announcing a change in our program. This year will mark the biggest change we have made in our program thus far. And these changes are due to increasing fluctuations in the weather during the past two years.

Our custom spring fertilizer formulations will now contain a pre-emergent herbicide, which is designed to reduce crabgrass and weeds before the seeds actually germinate. All of our research with fertilizer companies indicate that this is the best, most efficient way to control crabgrass and weeds. The fertilizer, along with with our disease and insect controls, will still be 100% natural and organic. Due to the addition of the pre-emergent herbicide, we now offer a program that is 80% non-toxic.

Our lawns have always looked beautiful, green and lush. The program is still competitively priced. However, climatic conditions over the past several years have caused incidents of crabgrass and weed growth that is beyond our level of tolerance.

We hope that you'll allow us the opportunity to explain our program in person. Please give us a call for a no-cost, no-obligation evaluation of your lawn.