

Personal Message

Isn't July supposed to be the middle of summer? As I write this newsletter in mid-June, it doesn't seem as if we've had much summer weather yet.

I was taught that summer began on June 21st. By that time, school was a distant memory. And the new school year was too far away to be more than a blip on the radar.

The beginning of July meant you're just settling into the routine of summer. Staying up late and sleeping even later. Unfortunately, we'd end up doing more chores than ever because there was no school.

But once those chores were finished, we would head for the pool to laze away the long summer afternoons. Dinner was usually served later since there was no homework to contend with. Our meals were full of fresh produce that would start to appear in July.

However, weather-wise, July 2009 is shaping up to be just as different as the spring of 2009 was. I'm beginning to wonder if there'll actually be a summer of 2009. The weather continues to be cool and rainy ... a most unusual year.

My hot weather garden plants like tomatoes and peppers appear dwarfed by the cooler weather vegetables. Gigantic rows of lettuce. Crowns of broccoli that bobble in the wind are bigger than a baby's head. Peas have grown up the side of my white picket fence and have provided a privacy hedge since spring. It's all very peculiar.

All this translates into an unusual year for us landscapers too. We continue to be plagued by rainy days that don't allow us to work. When we walk across a yard, our footsteps leave an ugly path that homeowners don't want to see.

Yet, in this rainy year, weeds have flourished like nobody's business. Long, green blades of grass wave in the breeze, begging to be cut. My crews have become intrepid at navigating their way through soggy landscaping projects, but there's only so much we can do.

In June I begged forgiveness for all the scheduling snafus that have occurred this year. Little did I know that our backlog of work would continue into July. At this time we're still running several weeks behind with various projects.

There have been days when we couldn't work at all. Sometimes we only worked half days. Several times I sent the men home after we stood in our shop for an hour and watched it rain without a break in the cloud cover. I know how bad it is for landscapers, but it must be just terrible for farmers. Our hearts go out to them.

Thank you for your patience and understanding. If you're on the waiting list, we hope to be with you soon. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have.

July Garden Tips

- Usually, our top garden tip for the month of July is to water the garden. Who knows if you'll ever need to turn on the hose again?
- However, keep an eye on your container plants as the weather gets hotter. If they dry out, some containers may need to be watered every day, especially the terra cotta variety. A good test is to push your finger into the soil to feel for moisture. Water containers until the liquid runs through the drainage holes in the bottom.
- Deadheading your plants seems to be the next tip for July. If you deadhead perennials now, you may be fortunate enough to have a second flowering.
- BE CAREFUL about your deadheading though. Don't pinch back your chrysanthemums after the second week in July. After that, you run the risk of not having blooming flowers in the fall.
- Take a look at houseplants. Now is a good time to repot overgrown ones.

More Details About Our Tick Repellent Program

Last month, we provided you with details about our barrier spray to repel ticks. We told you how I suffered from an infected tick bite several years ago. And about Dad contracting Lyme disease last year. It was for these reasons that we developed our tick repellent program.

In addition to the barrier tick spray which is extremely effective, we use Damminix tubes around your property. I'd like to explain why we use these tubes. They look like a cardboard tube from a roll of paper towels. However, they're an extremely effective tool in the fight against ticks.

Inside the tube, small cotton balls have been treated with repellent. Mice and squirrels love the cotton batting. They take tiny pieces away to build and restore their nests.

The cotton is treated with a poison called permethrin. It is not harmful to mammals or rodents. However, it's deadly to the tick population. As deer ticks feed on mice and squirrels, they ingest the permethrin poison. And they die off very quickly. So it's possible to have a beautiful wooded area or even a wood pile fairly close to the house without the threat of ticks.

We generally recommend placing the Damminix tubes in these areas. One tube will cover a fairly large area, so we estimate the number of tubes based on the size of your property.

Tubes are most effective when used in conjunction with the barrier tick spray.

Give us a call for a free estimate. Your property will be protected from ticks all summer long.

Proper Mowing Heights

Longtime readers of our newsletter will remember how often we climb on our soapbox to preach about proper mowing heights. In a nutshell, the taller the grass (within reason of course) the healthier your lawn will be.

That being said, we suggest the best height for your lawn is between 2.5 and 3 inches tall. We strongly advise that the lawn be mowed no shorter than 2 inches.

Low mowing heights allow weeds to gain a foothold, particularly in a newly established lawn. This can lead to a proliferation of crabgrass, the most noxious weed on the planet.

Anything you can do to help prevent the spread of crabgrass will help. The unprecedented rainfall this spring has caused a sharp increase in crabgrass in many lawns.

As a natural/organic landscaper, there is only so much we can do to prevent weed growth. Basic cultural practices, such as proper mowing heights, can really help when it comes to establishing a healthy root system.

There are other procedures you can follow to help reduce lawn problems. If you're a do-it-yourselfer, take a look at your lawn mower. A sharp blade is essential. Make sure the blade has been sharpened for the season.

It's also suggested that you avoid cutting grass if the air temperature is above 90 degrees. (Sometimes that's just not possible. Not all basic cultural practices are practical!)

If you need assistance, please don't forget that we offer grass cutting services. If you're interested in a one-time cut or regularly scheduled lawn mowing, we still have some availability. We'll be happy to come out and take a look at your lawn.

Our brand-new Bobcat mowers are ready to handle both large and small properties. We are happy to accommodate all types of mowing requests. Our service includes weed-eating around landscape beds and blowing the grass off driveways and walkways.

Here's another bonus: You are guaranteed a space on our calendar each month. The spring rains played havoc with our schedule. Even now we're still playing catch-up and trying to finish our spring cleaning on various properties.

However, if you're on the monthly maintenance rotation, you are assured that we will reserve space on the schedule. Regular customers always come first in our book!

Here's the best part about this program: There is no minimum and no contract to sign. In fact, you don't even have to use us every month. You can always say no. We'll skip that month and contact you again the following month. It's a simple and easy way to keep tabs on your outdoor space.

Give our program a try. It won't cost you anything. You may find that you enjoy a landscaping review on a monthly basis. Remember there's no obligation to use us each month.