

## A Personal Message

In like a lion. Out like a lamb. That old March adage seems to ring true this year. I can hear the wind blowing almost through the windows as I write this issue of our newsletter.

We're starting to put a few of our seeds into starter pots. Soon, they'll overtake all the available sunny spots in the house. This year, we're growing lots of flowers for Melissa to plant into her gardens out front. During February, I attended a day-long seminar in Salisbury which is required every year to continue my pesticide certification. Maryland mandates that every commercial applicator attend an annual training course to keep their licenses up to date. Even though we pride ourselves on providing natural/organic lawn care, we must still use pesticides to control weed growth. So, I have to stay current on all new regulations. I'd like to advise you that I now have a landscape designer on staff. Dave Lee is a manager in my company and has been with me for several years now. Over the past year, I've turned him loose and let him work with about a dozen clients. He has even planned a beachscape for my Ocean City property. It features a mini-boardwalk with white sand being used as mulch. Dave has pleased every client he has worked with and I'm pleased with him too.

If you're interested in speaking with him, give us a call. There is no charge for a consultation. The spring lawn season is almost upon us. We'll start spreading lime and fertilizer within the next few weeks. Our natural/organic lawn care program is 80% non-toxic. It combines the use of organic fertilizers and composts with naturally occurring products. This helps to deter insects, fungus and diseases.

Our program also incorporates basic cultural practices. One of the cornerstones of organic lawn care is aeration. This process involves taking a "plug" of your soil every few inches. Aeration relieves soil compaction and allows nutrients to reach the root zone more quickly.

We'll recommend other general healthy lawn practices also. The proper mowing height of approximately three inches is an essential tool for relieving unnecessary stress on your lawn. Watering your lawn deeply 2-3 times a week in the early morning hours helps to reduce the chance of fungus attacking the grass. Our lawn analysis is complimentary, so feel free to give us a call.

## Garden Tips

- Consider building a raised bed for your garden this year. They're much easier to maintain. These gardens will be filled with clean soil, so weed control will be much easier too. You won't have to bend and stoop, so gardening will be fun again.
- Don't forget to add a soil amendment to your landscape beds. We recommend pelletized compost. This is a wonderful compost material that has been heated to very high temperatures to form granular pellets. It has all the benefits of traditional compost, but is virtually odorless. We like it so much that we use it in our gardens at home.
- If you're tempted by all the seed catalogs, go ahead and try a few varieties. The main requirements are to keep seeds fairly warm and not to water too much. Don't pay attention to catalogs that try to convince you to purchase expensive seed-starting devices. They're not really necessary in this climate.

## Spring Clean-Up

Get ready for planting. You wouldn't dream of cooking dinner when all your dishes are dirty. So, you shouldn't plant flowers when your landscape beds are messy either.

There's a lot to do in the garden during March. By this time, winter is mostly over and done with. But, winter debris still remains.

You may need leaf removal in your landscape beds. Leaves can be raked or blown out of the beds to uncover the soil.

Those tired, spent annuals from last summer need to be pulled up and thrown away. Crawling vines and winter weeds should also be removed. Raking the soil helps to remove the last bit of debris. Your gardens will look cleaner and better too.

Unless you plan to plant seeds, you'll want to apply a pre-emergent herbicide in the garden. These herbicides help to prevent weed seed germination. Studies have shown that a pre-emergent herbicide can reduce the amount of hand maintenance needed by almost 70% during the year.

Don't forget the soil amendments. Remember, we like to use pelletized compost, but Leaf Grow is another good alternative.

Finally, we need to address the issue of mulch. Mulch is absolutely necessary in your landscape beds, but many gardens have way too much mulch in them. It helps retain moisture for your plants during the hot summer months. If you break up the hard crust that has formed during the winter, you may need to apply only a thin layer of mulch to enhance the look of your beds.

Now for the fun part. Select your new plants and watch them grow.

### **It's Time to Trim Ornamental Grasses**

Late winter and early spring is the time to trim your ornamental grasses. Coarse-leafed ornamentals such as liriop and pampas grass need trimming before the weather warms up. These types of grasses should be pruned almost back to the ground. This type of trimming will promote healthier growth in the spring.

If you attempt to do the pruning yourself, watch out. You need to wear gloves and a long sleeved shirt with long pants. Otherwise, you may be seriously cut by the grass itself.

These thick ornamentals almost always require a chain saw or a hedge trimmer to cut them to the base. Always use eye protection when running this type of equipment.

We are experts at trimming ornamental grasses. We can get the job done quickly and efficiently with our equipment. Our large dump trucks are able to carry loads of debris away, so please keep us in mind if you need assistance with this type of project.

### **Caring for Your Lawn**

By the time you read this newsletter, you will probably have received several pieces of mail from us about our natural/organic lawn care program.

I hope you'll consider us for your lawn care needs this season. More and more organic products and services are becoming available. As consumer demand grows for organic solutions, we can begin to reduce our dependence on synthetic products that most companies use.

If nothing else, our proximity to the Chesapeake Bay should cause you to consider the harm that chemical fertilizers can do to our water supplies. Organic lawn care can significantly reduce this type of pollution. We guarantee that your lawn will be healthier too.