

Garden Tips

- Here's a garden tip from the Internet that we never considered before. When planning your annual flower gardens, consider planting rows in an east to west fashion to take advantage of full sunlight. Also, plan to install taller plants at the north side of the garden to avoid shading smaller ones.
- On a sunny day, everyone wants to head for their gardens. **CAUTION!** Do not walk in the garden when the soil is wet. Your footsteps will compact the soil and can create drainage issues in the future. Find another garden chore to occupy your time. There's always plenty to do in the spring.
- Will you remember where your spring flowering bulbs are located after they finish blooming? Probably not. Take a few moments now to jot down notes or make a quick sketch of where these bulbs are planted. You'll be glad you did when you're ready to install additional plant material.

A Personal Message

Is it March already? This winter is flying by so quickly. The frigid Artic blasts of early February finally forced us indoors. However, we made good use of the time by renovating Melissa's office.

She was working at an old kitchen table in a dark paneled room. Now, her office is bright and comfortable. She loves the new ceiling fan we installed for her. It's the first room you enter when you come through the door. We hope you'll stop by for a visit soon and be sure to compliment our handiwork.

In fact, we've continued extensive renovations to our property. We just repaired a huge broken water main. Perhaps you've noticed the backhoe in front of our house. We had to dig up our entire parking lot to replace the water pipes.

So, with most of the heavy construction completed, it's time for us to start our outdoor renovations. After several months of scratching our heads, Melissa and I decided that the design job was beyond our talents. Therefore, we've engaged the services of Jayne Bourke, ASLA, APLD to help implement the plans.

Without giving away all the details, here are a few tidbits from our new design. We will incorporate a white fence around the perimeter of the property. Jayne is working with us to help separate our private outdoor space from the business areas. We've installed five water hydrants all around the grounds so that we can use drip irrigation for those fussy, but beautiful plants that Melissa loves. So, watch this space or better yet, watch our progress whenever you drive by our location.

I've always enjoyed the month of March. It's such an exciting time in the garden. When I see those first crocus blooms peeking through the soil, I get so excited. When I glimpse a budding forsythia, I know the cold

world of winter is starting to correct itself. Even though there's still a risk of snow, the threat grows smaller every day.

We're already adding jobs to the schedule for warmer weather. The biggest chore this month is to trim your ornamental grasses, if they haven't been done already. Remember, their growing season begins soon and grasses can become unwieldy very quickly. Also, it's not too early to begin clearing the winter debris from your lawn and landscape beds. Weeds need to be pulled, leaves blown out of the beds and off lawns and perennials should be cut back for stronger growth this season.

Hope you have a wonderful spring!

Deer Damage on the Rise

As new plant growth begins, you are not the only one watching. Hungry deer feed more voraciously in the spring than at any other time of the year.

For planning purposes, we thought it might be helpful to have a partial list of deer resistant plants. The University of Maryland Cooperative Extension has published Fact Sheet #655 with this very information. It lists trees, shrubs and annuals/perennials that are rarely damaged to frequently damaged. Some of the more fragile plants are Hostas, Geraniums, Daylilies and Pansies. Other plants that are easily harmed are English Ivy, Sunflowers and Violas.

On the flip side, deer resistant plants are listed as Lavender, Coreopsis and Snapdragons. Additional alternatives are Coneflowers and Marigolds. The Fact Sheet states that deer damage to different plants will fluctuate according to changes in population, food availability and environmental conditions.

You can access this information at www.hgic.umd.edu or call **1.800.342.2507**.

If you choose to go ahead and install plants that deer enjoy, we may be able to help. For the past three years, we have offered a natural/organic deer repellent service. It's 100% effective and best of all, the cost actually decreases after the first 3 months.

We offer the extra added benefit of a pleasant aroma for the spray. Most repellents use a garlic and egg based formula which smells horrible. You'd think they would be effective because they smell so bad, but our peppermint based product beats them hands down.

Our product is EPA exempt and won't harm plants, pets or deer. There is no need to reapply our product after normal rainfall levels in the mid-Atlantic region.

As stated above, there's a reduction in price after using the program for the first 3 months. The spray is applied more heavily during those first three months of treatment.

Deer start to avoid the treated plant material and move on to other feeding grounds. As a result, we are able to reduce the amount of spray somewhat and pass the savings on to you.

Ready to Grow Again

Lawn season is looming just over the horizon. If you want a lawn care program this summer, we need to put you on the schedule this month.

We offer an alternative to most "weed and feed" programs in the area. Our lawn service is a natural/organic program. We use an 80% non-toxic approach to lawn care, combined with an emphasis on basic cultural practices.

Last month's issue of our newsletter discussed how we are revising our weed controls this year. This spring, our custom fertilizer will contain a pre-emergent herbicide, which is designed to reduce crabgrass and weeds before the seeds actually germinate. Our research with various fertilizer manufacturers indicates that this is the most efficient way to control weeds, especially crabgrass. Please keep in mind that the actual fertilizer, along with our disease and insect controls will remain 100% natural and organic.

Our program operates similarly to other lawn care programs. We will visit your property, do a no-cost lawn evaluation, explain the program to you, provide the costs of the program and answer any questions you may have. Soil tests are also conducted to determine subsequent fertilizer and calcium applications. We will come to your property up to five times during the course of the growing season and provide all of the services your lawn needs. Our program is comparably priced with traditional lawn care services. And, you'll have a lush, green lawn without harsh chemicals harming our environment.