

Garden Tips

- Cut back spring perennials as they yellow out and die (i.e. irises and daffodils.) This will help them to bloom more fully next year.
- Consider grouping plants in landscaped beds instead of individually around the yard. This technique draws the eye to a center focal point. It gives your landscaping a more natural look instead of having plants forced into unnatural spots on your property. Also, watering and weeding are much easier to control when you have a concentration of plants in one place
- When buying plants, make sure you consider where you are putting them. All too often, we are lured by a lush, in-store display that might feature shade-loving plants when there really are no shady spots in your yard. Purchase annuals that are well-suited for your particular landscaping. Last month was spent working around the raindrops. Bad weather has caused us to lag far behind in our scheduling. Our sincerest apologies to anyone whose outdoor projects have been delayed. I try to stay in touch with you about any changes in the schedule. We are working in the evenings and on weekends too, trying to make up for lost time. Thanks to everyone for your patience while we work around Mother Nature's schedule.

Melissa and I have even pulled back on planting our vegetable garden this year. We were unable to plant some of the early spring crops, such as peas and spring onions, because we were afraid the tender young plants would drown. However, this month is shaping up to be a good one for getting most of our vegetables into the ground.

By the way, did anyone enjoy the daffodils and blooming forsythia as much as I did this spring? It just seemed as if winter lasted much longer than usual this year. So when those first little daffodil faces opened up last month, I was in 7th heaven. We also have several huge forsythia bushes in our yard. For a couple of weeks, the whole property was dressed up in yellow for the arrival of spring.

I'd like to take a moment to talk about weeds. As you might guess, they're a major part of any landscaper's life. We're seeing weeds start growing earlier than usual this year...probably because of all that rain this spring.

If weed control is starting to wear you down, please consider letting us help you in one of several ways. We can come to your property to do a one-time weeding, just to get you back into shape for the summer. Or, I always like to suggest that you sign up for our monthly weeding program. Remember, there is no contract, no minimum and we do not charge for the months we do not work. It just gives us a way to better schedule anyone who needs weeding done. There are plenty of spaces still available for this year's program, but please let me know soon, if you want to be included.

Summer Flowering Bulbs

Most summer bulbs are tender and must be planted in the spring well after the last frost of the season. Examples of these bulbs are dahlias, begonias and anemones which are all showy and colorful flowers.

Generally, they are extended bloomers and produce flowers long into the summer season. They should be dug up in the fall and stored indoors over the winter. Let us know if we can help with planting your bulbs.

For Further Information...

I just found the niftiest gardening information website. And, they offer telephone assistance too. The Home and Garden Information Center offers Fact Sheets about topics such as "Landscapes That Help the Chesapeake Bay" and "Container Vegetable Gardening." The Fact Sheets are really interesting and easy to follow. They're published in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Agency. These are the people who run the Master Gardener program for the state of Maryland.

Fact Sheets are numbered and can be ordered through the mail by going to their website. Their address is: www.hgic.umd.edu. You can also call **1.800.342.2507**, toll free, to speak to a horticultural consultant about a garden problem. Telephone hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM-1:00 PM.

I called to speak with a consultant one morning and the folks in the office couldn't have been nicer. You can email any of your questions too...there's a link on the website.

NOTE: I especially like the plant and insect diagnostic capabilities on the website. They offer photographic keys to help diagnose and solve plant and pest problems. If you can't resolve the situation by using the photographs, you can send them a sample for diagnosis. They recommend that you call before you send the sample. There's a \$10.00 fee for the diagnosis.

So, take a few minutes to look at the site or give them a call with your questions. They're the experts in this state and we could all stand to take a tip from them.

How to Get Rid of Moss in Your Lawn

For years, I have suspected that mossy growth in a lawn is the result of a low pH level in the soil. And for years, I have recommended that lime be added to turf to discourage the growth of moss. I had no real proof. All I knew is that when I applied lime, the moss went away.

Now the U.S. Department of Agriculture has confirmed my suspicions with their "Moss Control in Home Lawns" Fact Sheet (#HG 100).

If moss is not the result of a drainage problem, then it seems to be indicative of a low pH level in the soil. However, they do state that moss will continue to grow IF the area is shady and moist. A soil test will give you the information you need.

Lime should be applied according to your lawn's individual soil test results. The Department of Agriculture recommends that the pH level run somewhere in the 6.0 to 6.8 range. Since trees have different nutrient requirements from turf, it's a misconception that acid loving pine trees will be harmed by adding lime. The pH levels of a lawn can be raised without harm to your trees.

The Department of Agriculture further states that moss does not actually kill grass; rather it creeps into areas of the lawn that are thin and weak. Some indicators that your lawn is prime territory for moss growth are compacted soil, excessive irrigation and a dense canopy of shade.

So, in addition to raising the pH level of the soil with the application of lime, good cultural practices can help to greatly reduce the spread of moss. Aerating your lawn to reduce soil compaction is one of the basic tenets of our natural/organic lawn care program. We've been aerating problem lawns for years.

Irrigation problems can be repaired by filling in low lying areas with topsoil. Naturally, you'll want these areas graded properly to smooth out the lawn. Then, we can overseed problem areas with our proprietary blend of high quality grass seed. And, a thorough pruning of your trees and shrubs will allow more light and air to circulate through your lawn.

Please let us know if we can assist you with correcting moss growth in your lawn. The best defense against this type of problem is to promote a healthy lawn by using basic cultural practices and the proper amounts of lime for your individual property