

Personal Message

Here comes my favorite time of year! Sometimes, it's the little things that are the most poignant.

I stepped outside the other morning around 6:00 AM. The smell of smoke permeated the air. Apparently, one of my neighbors now heats their home with a wood stove.

That scent evoked vivid memories of childhood. I spent part of my youth in Canada. We heated our home there with a wood stove. Yours truly spent much of his youth chopping wood and filling the stove.

We cooked on a wood stove too. There was nothing better than a meal prepared on that stove. And, my favorite item on the menu was toast. We would toast the bread right on the stove. It was out of this world!

Even now, Melissa and I use a wood pellet stove to heat our offices. Wood pellets don't have the same wonderfully pungent smell as firewood. However, there's a lot to be said for convenience.

There's lots of good food cooking at my adult homestead too. As I write this newsletter, we haven't decided whether to do a traditional Thanksgiving meal or not.

I've been experimenting with soul food a lot this fall. I don't know exactly why, but I decided that it was important to learn to cook the perfect pot of collard greens. I learned well, if I do say so myself.

I'm also trying sweet potato biscuits and black-eyed peas. We love a liberal dose of vinegar poured onto our greens and peas.

At this point, we're not exactly sure what will end up on our Thanksgiving table. Whatever happens, we know there's a lot to be thankful for this year.

We're also in the mood for Christmas. Melissa is busy shopping and wrapping. I'm so grateful that she handles those chores. It would be nice if she would purchase her own gifts and wrap those up too. However, she draws the line there. Calls it unromantic, not in the spirit of the season or some such nonsense. Bah!

I'm looking forward to a big tree again this year. Last year, we had three trees in my office/great room. It got a little crowded in there. So, I may cut back to the large live tree and my vintage silver tree.

I always wanted an artificial silver tree like the ones from the 1960's. A color wheel slowly revolves, casting various hues on the silver boughs.

I purchased one of these trees from e-Bay several years ago and it's now one of my prized possessions. It will sit on top of my desk during the season to help me remember Christmases from my past.

November Garden Tips

- Remember our feathered friends. Now is the time to bring those bird feeders out of storage. However, please make sure they're clean. Left unchecked, feeders may foster fungus and bacteria which will harm birds. Clean them first with a mixture of nine parts water to one part bleach. Your bird feeder restaurant will have lines out the door!
- If you can find them to purchase, you can still plant spring flowering bulbs. The little bit of time you invest this fall will provide years of enjoyment in the future.
- Check your own backyard for Thanksgiving bouquets this year. There should be plenty of Nandina, Beautyberry and Magnolia available. Pyracantha is also beautiful right now, if you can get past the thorns to cut it.
- You may remember from our past newsletters that fall is an excellent time to plant (and transplant) trees and bushes. If you have done any planting around your property, be sure to keep everything well-watered. It's been dry this fall and there's not enough rainfall. Water deeply and thoroughly.

Managing Deer Browsing

As I was driving back to St. Michaels one beautiful afternoon in late October, I glanced at the cornfield to my right. It had been mowed recently and the once tall, wavy stalks were now only 2 feet tall.

A white tailed deer was racing me through these short rows of brown stubs. He was running parallel to my car and darn it, he was winning! The race lasted only a moment.

In an instant, he flashed into the woods at the edge of the cornfield and was gone from my sight.

It served to remind me that as deer are forced from their natural habitats, they become increasingly visible in our manmade environment. Their browsing causes millions of dollars of damage to landscaping each year.

Deer damage to home landscapes and gardens is the number one complaint in suburban areas today. This bit of information came to us from the Maryland Cooperative Extension Agency Fact Sheet #810.

We review these fact sheets periodically and like to pass pertinent information along to you.

Since we offer a natural/organic deer repellent program, this fact sheet seems particularly relevant.

Commercial deer repellent programs have become increasingly popular, although some of them are more effective than others. They all tend to work best when combined with other strategies.

The University of Maryland suggests a combination of population management, fencing, vegetation management, scare tactics and repellents to minimize deer damage.

Our proprietary formula actually uses the pleasant aroma of peppermint to keep the herd at bay. Repellent is sprayed directly on the plants to be protected. Some damage may occur while the deer are still approaching the plant material that has been sprayed. It usually takes several attempts before they move on to other feeding grounds.

After about three months, they eventually recognize the bad taste. That's when the cost of our program actually decreases. We're able to spray less product on the plant material and we pass the cost savings on to you.

To recap, our program is natural and organic and has a peppermint oil base that humans prefer over the horrible odor of garlic and egg based sprays.

Best of all, the price drops after three months of Service. We hope you'll give us a try if you're having problems with deer damage.

Leaves Are Falling Once Again

Fall means it's leaf removal time again. and that winter isn't too far away.

Why is it important to keep leaves off your lawn? They block the sunlight which is essential to the growth and development of your turfgrass. A lack of light reduces photosynthesis production. Grass needs the nutrients that occur during photosynthesis, even during the winter months.

When the weather is cooler, your lawn manufactures food in its root system. This way, grass can actually continue to grow underground, even during the dormant season. As a matter of fact, right now, your lawn needs more food than normal and all the sunlight it can get. So, it's really important to get those leaves off the grass.

Our leaf vacuum has a 15 foot hose that can reach across your property to suck up huge piles of leaves. It actually mulches the leaves as it vacuums them up. This makes the entire process much more efficient because we can haul solid and compact loads of leaves off your property. Our top of the line backpack blowers reach into every crevice of your yard to erase all traces of autumn.

We offer rapid response leaf removal services that are thorough and efficient. We understand that with the Holidays approaching, you may have plans and that means your yard needs to look sharp. If you have a family function or a party scheduled, call us to clean up right before the event and we'll juggle our schedule to fit yours.

So, give us a call if we can assist you this fall!