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Monthly Lawn Care Tips

MARCH: Spring Clean Up Tips

Spring is in the air! Spring is a time of rebirth and reawakening from a long winter's nap. It is also a time to set up your yard for a successful summer. Getting out into the fresh air of spring can do much to revitalize you as well as your plants. Here are some proactive turf care tip that will reward you with a healthier and more vigorous landscape.

Tip #1: Assess your lawn damage.

The first thing you should do is to take a walk round your lawn and survey the effects the winter had on your property. If you have a dog, you may have to clean up their winter "activity". There is no quick cure for dog damage except a lot of water to wash the salts from the urine into the soil. In most cases, the grass will recover. If the damage is severe, resodding or new lawn seeding of the areas may be necessary.

Tip #2: Check your grass for Snow Mold.

Check your grass for matted patches that could signal the development of Snow Mold. This lawn disease *glues* the grass blades together, which may inhibit the new grass from growing through the mat. A *light* raking to break up the matted grass will remedy this situation. If the grass was left too long last fall, an early mowing at 1 1/2 to 2" is advisable. This will remove much of the dead grass from last year's growth and allow the new growth to come through easier. A light raking of the entire lawn is also beneficial. This is especially true if there are leaves still scattered across the lawn.

Note: Be careful if the ground is wet when you are raking. Vigorous raking can uproot the grass plants.

Tip #3: It's time to fertilize and mow the lawn for the first time.

A light application of lawn fertilizer in the spring helps get your grass off to a great start. Wait to fertilize until your lawn needs mowing for the first time. Do a light application and use a slow-release fertilizer; don't try to feed your lawn for a quick green-up as this usually doesn't work and has the potential to harm your grass.

Allow your grass to grow no more than 3 inches tall before you start mowing. The best general rule to follow is that you want to keep most grass types at least 2 inches tall – this height helps the grass ward off weeds and withstand summer drought. But you don't want to remove more than a third of the total grass height at any one mowing. Removing too much stresses the grass.

Tip #4: Wait to uncover your garden's roses.

Do not uncover your roses until the danger of a heavy frost is over. When you do uncover them, clean away any soil or other organic material that was used to seal them in for the winter. This material can carry disease spores that can infect your plants. While the plants are still dormant, you can improve their health and vigor with these selective pruning steps:

- Remove any dead, blackened, or damaged wood.
- Prune the cane down to healthy wood, just before a leaf bud.
- Remove any branches that may be crossing, that are twiggy, or are growing out of the side of a cane.
- Remove old canes at the bud union and leave 3 to 5 good ones that are evenly distributed.
- Delay mulching around the plants as this will keep the soil cold and delay the growth of the bushes.

Tip #5: Check the remaining aspects of your landscape for damage, growth progress and needed improvements.

Check your woody landscape plants for injury — particularly the evergreens. Do not be too alarmed if you do not see new growth. Wait until the buds have opened before removing any dead branches, unless they are broken. Take the same "wait and see" approach with perennial plants. Remove any mulch that was placed there to protect them. Some plants take a longer time to come out of winter dormancy than others do. If scale insects or tent caterpillars bothered your landscape plants last year, then you should consider spraying with dormant oil before the buds open. This material will smother the egg cases or over-wintering adults.

Natural Concept Landscape Co., Inc. is ready to assist you with all of your lawn care needs, offering preventative maintenance as well as on-going lawn and garden maintenance options. Should you notice any problem areas in your lawn, please give us a call to schedule a free consultation. Your lawn will be happy you called us... And you will be too!

