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Nature's Landscape News & Notes

Volume, Issue 3

March 2010

Spring is coming! Old man winter will soon disappear. Now is the time to prepare our yards so we will be able to enjoy them for the length of the summer. The days are longer, the sun is warmer, and sooner or later the buds of trees and shrubs will start growing.

One way to shorten the waiting period until the gardening season is to force branches of spring flowering shrubs like forsythia, pussy willow, hawthorn, honeysuckle, apple, and crabapple. To do this, cut the branches on a sharp slant. Make a slit in the end of each branch. Scrape off the outer bark of branches an inch or more in diameter, to allow faster water absorption. Then place in warm water. For best results, change the water daily.

Late Winter Pruning



A great time for pruning as winter releases its grip. Remove dead, diseased, and rubbing branches, and do any thinning needed to open up a tree canopy to more air and sunlight. Cut broken branches back to a main branch or the trunk rather than leaving stubs. If you haven't already done so, now is a great time to prune fruit trees (including apples, pears, and cherries) and fruits such as raspberries and grapes. You can also go ahead and prune summer-blooming shrubs such as butterfly bush and rose of Sharon. Wait to prune your spring-blooming shrubs (such as forsythia and lilacs) until they've finished blooming so you don't cut off next year's flowers. This is also the season to prune back roses. Typically, you'll want to cut hybrid tea, grandiflora, and floribunda roses to about 6 inches tall. If not done already, a no cost review of your property with one of our Certified Arborists is strongly suggested. It is best to schedule an appointment at your earliest convenience to walk your property together.

Garden Clean-Up Time



If you left any perennials over winter, cut back the dead stems before or as the plants put out new growth. Here's a hint: Cut dead stems back to 3 or 4 inches tall. This will help you remember where late-emerging varieties such as perennial hibiscus and butterfly weed are. Plus, the stubs may stop rabbits and other critters from nibbling on your plants' new growth. It's time for cutting back ornamental grasses, and checking perennials for frost heaving are some of the gardening tips for this month. Before the new shoots emerge, cut back last year's stalks of ornamental

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Fact of the Month:

In 2004 the United States Congress passed legislation designating a National Tree for the United States. The oak tree was chosen. The tree was selected after a four-month voting process hosted by the Arbor Day Foundation. No specific oak species is selected, thus the entire oak genus *Quercus* must serve as the National Tree. There are 90 species of oak native to the United States, in addition to many hybrids and a few introduced species. Native oak species occur in every state except Alaska, Hawaii, and Idaho.

Garden Tips

MONTHLY CHECKLIST

What You Can Do:

- Check for signs of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, a common pest this season. Ask your arborist for details.
- Be on the lookout for common problems such as scale, aphids, and mites.
- Plan for dormant oil spray to prevent insect infestations.
- Attend to your indoor plants too.

grasses. Don't cut back too far, only 15 to 24 inches above the soil surface, otherwise you may cut off some of this season's growing points buried in stems.

Remove winter mulch from your perennial gardens once you notice new growth emerging from your plants. Afterward, watch for weeds. Early season varieties such as chickweed and henbit thrive in cool temperatures and may start sprout.

Contact us to schedule spring cleanup services, which can include: raking up debris and leaves, cutting back perennials, fertilizing or re-mulching your planting beds. Don't forget to talk to us about lawn mowing as well, soon enough the grass will be vigorously growing.

AquaBasin® Minis-"Instant Water Features"



Water features provide you with a unique and creative way to decorate your outdoor living space. Most people desire the soothing sounds of running water, but just aren't ready for a full-fledged ecosystem pond or simply can't afford one right now.

Aquascape's AquaBasin® Minis make it simple to have a water feature in almost any setting. Create a simple bubbling fountain or add one of the many Aquascape water fountains or features to suit your taste. Made of fiberglass stone composite, the decorative fountain has all the natural beauty of real rock with the added durability and light weight of fiberglass. Fiberglass stone composite can be used indoors or out, never fades or chips, has a natural rock veneer and ages like real stone!

Start planning your garden paradise today and be sure to include an Aquascape AquaBasin® Mini! For any questions on this or any water feature contact our Certified Aquascape Contractor.



Plant of the Month-Shamrocks

Green, the color most widely associated with Ireland, Irish People, and with St. Patrick's Day in modern times, may have gained its prominence through the phrase "the wearing of the green" meaning to wear a shamrock on one's clothing. The name shamrock is derived from the word for clover, which also has three leaflets. The native Irish clover is widely regarded as the true shamrock; however, white-clover (the same one many consider a lawn weed!) and the Black Medic (also usually considered a lawn weed) are also used as shamrocks. This is where the term 4-leaf clover originated. All are of the pea family, Leguminosae. Many however don't know there is an actual shamrock plant (native to Ireland), and that this possibly was the plant originally used by St. Patrick.

Shamrock plants are a tender potted plant that grows from a bulb like root system and while the leaves look like clover, these plants are not related. They can be grown outdoors down into growing zone 6 (our local zone) but are more easily grown as houseplants, they enjoy bright indirect sunlight. Since Shamrocks grow from a bulb, they enjoy a period of dormancy every year. During the winter months trim back the plants brown leaves, give the plant very little water, and place it in a cool place so it can go dormant for a month or two. In the spring begin watering your shamrock plant and give it a dose of fertilizer to bring it back to life. In the summer your shamrock can be placed outside in a shady location, and watered regularly. If it's properly cared for your shamrock plant will reward you with small delicate white flowers.

They've just come through a long winter and need a bit of fertilizer.

-Make sure that you provide a consistent source of food and water now for wild birds, so they continue to visit you as spring approaches.

-Apply a fresh layer of Mulch for early prevention of weeds and grass in tree and shrub beds.

What Our Professionals Should Do:

- Inspect, prune and repair winter damaged trees and shrubs.

-Complete dormant pruning of ornamental and shade trees.

-Dormant oil spray to help control overwintering insects before they hatch.

-Begin Spring fertilization program.

-Clean up any dead foliage and debris you did not take care of in the fall. Rakes aren't only for Autumn.

Is Your Home or Business on our Spring Clean-up Schedule?

Did you know that...This is the time of year that sugar maples are tapped for maple syrup. It takes

Creepy Crawlies & Other Pesky Critters



Ray Smith & Associates now offers Nuisance Pest Control as part of our full service property care. We are a Full Service Wildlife Control Company. Our in-house technicians are licensed by New York State and can remedy such pests as, but not limited to: Bees, Bats, Raccoons, Ants, Opossums, Spiders, Squirrels, Crickets, Chipmunks, Moths, Vole, Moles and anything else "creepy-crawly"! We can also contract to do the clean-up which is often associated with many nuisance pests.

Early Spring Lawn Care



If annual weeds such as crabgrass are a problem in your yard, stop them in their tracks by applying a pre-emergence herbicide. Watch for your forsythia to bloom -- that's typically a good indicator of when it's best to treat your lawn for crabgrass as the soil at that time has usually warmed enough to germinate seeds.

This could be late March or sometime into April. It is critical to time this application precisely, too early and control runs out before all the weeds have germinated; too late and the weeds will take over.

Even though your grass may be starting to green up, it's probably too early to fertilize. Wait a month or so until your grass is actively growing before feeding it.

The time to overseed, repair dead spots and even renovate lawns is coming up. Our lawn care experts can guide you with all your care questions and needs. A soil test taken now will allow us to customize just the right fertility program for your lawn. Set an appointment for a thorough lawn evaluation and we can design program to get your lawn looking its best through the season.

ASK THE EXPERT-Spring Feeding: Yes or No?

"Do my trees and shrubs really need to be fertilized?" We hear this question time and time again from our customers, and the answer is a resounding "yes!"

Construction activities when homes are built lead to soil that is heavily compacted, poorly aerated and poorly drained - not the best conditions for tree and shrub growth. In their natural forest habitat, trees and shrubs have a constant supply of nutrients from decomposing layers of leaves and other organic matter on the forest floor. But in our lawns and landscapes, we regularly rake away leaves and other organic matter before it has a chance to decompose.



What Deep Root Feeding Does

Our natural based deep root feeding helps create the soil conditions that allow roots to branch out and grow in size, making it easier for your trees and shrubs to survive drought and other stresses. A healthy soil ensures that your trees and shrubs have the essential nutrients they need for healthy growth. When they are fed regularly, your trees and shrubs will exhibit deeper color, denser growth and better blooming. Plus, they will have an improved ability to fight off insects and disease.

What if They are Not Properly Fertilized?

Without fertilization, your trees and shrubs won't be able to reach their true potential. And over time, they may begin to show signs of nutrient deficiency, including:

- Poor leaf color

40 gallons of maple sugar sap to make 1 gallon of syrup.

- Reduced leaf size
- Premature fall coloration and leaf drop
- Reduced twig and branch growth
- An overall reduction in tree growth and vigor

By having your trees and shrubs fertilized regularly, you'll be rewarded with healthier, more beautiful trees and shrubs that you can enjoy for many years to come. We encourage the use of soil analysis, and even leaf analysis be done so that we can apply just the right mix of natural organic materials, natural bio-stimulants and nutrients for your plants. Schedule now so that we can take these samples for analysis before we start a program.

[E-Mail Your Questions](#)

RAY SMITH & ASSOCIATES, INC.

**27 Henry Road, Unit 1
Southampton, NY 11968
631-287-6100**

*Providing beautiful, healthy, and balanced landscapes
for over 30 Years*

