

LAWN & GARDEN HOW TO

Created by;



Daniel & Niki Ottosen

Ph: 478-9237 Fax: 474-0247
e-mail: gardenerforhire@telus.net



Gardener for Hire Ltd.

COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL MAINTENANCE

Table of Contents

1. Garden Maintenance
2. Lawn Maintenance
3. Garden Bed Preparation
4. Planting Procedure
5. Installing and maintaining Flower Gardens
6. New lawn installation & preparation
7. Renovating existing lawns
8. Lawn Problems
9. Composting
10. Garden Design
11. Garden Design continued

Garden Maintenance

- Weeding will be a year round job for the first 2 years. Never let them go to seed.
- If you keep on top of weeding, and never let them go to seed, after 2 yrs you should only have to weed from February to May, and it will be minimal.
- Apply fertilizer twice a year, to all trees, shrubs, and perennials, in **March & June (10-20-10)** Always water in any fertilizer.
- Or apply a layer of compost to entire bed. (March)
- Dig out your lawn edges every time you weed, to a depth of 3-4 inches, toss material back into garden and rake out.
- Always add organic matter at least once a year, compost, bark mulch, or well aged manure. (manure that is too fresh will burn plants)
- Cultivate beds slightly before you add material.
- Apply the same fertilizer you would for your lawns (18-5-10) to your Cedar hedges.
- Dead head all perennials and rhodos as they flower through spring.
- A rule of thumb for dead heading is to cut dead flower heads back, stem and all, to the first set of leaves. For Rhododendrons, you pinch off the flower heads with your fingers, being careful not to take any of the stem because that is where the new set of leaves will come from!
- Start irrigation and/or watering schedule, after you fertilize in March.
- Example; March-once a week. April- twice a week. May-Aug-every three days. Deep watering every 3-4 days is optimum. (This also varies with weather, and location.)
- Lightly prune all shrubs after they flower, only if necessary. Plants should be allowed to grow into their natural shape, and should never be pruned into round balls. This causes stress, which makes the plant susceptible to pests and disease.
- Never, Ever, Cut The Top Off A Tree !
- If you constantly have to cut back a plant because it's in the way, this means that it is the wrong plant for the location, and it should be moved.
- Fertilize lawns, shrubs, trees and perennials again in June (Same numbers)
- Continue light pruning, weeding, and dead heading throughout the summer.
- Prune back hedges May and September.
- Fall is the best time to plant, lawns and gardens. (not after thanksgiving though, for lawns)
- Plant bulbs and winter annuals in the fall, (Sept-Nov.)
- Keep up on weeding.
- Apply another layer of compost or bark mulch in the fall or winter months.
- Keeping your garden clean during the winter months, will remove places for pests and disease to hibernate.

Lawn Maintenance

- Fertilize lawns 3 times a year, with **(18-5-10)** in **March &, June**. Then fertilize with **(12-5-20)** in **September**, let your lawn rest for the winter.
- Aerate your lawn twice a year, **March** and **Sept**, the same time you fertilize. Aerate 3-4 times per year if you have high traffic and/or, a lot of compaction.
- Watering your lawn deeply a day or two before aerating will ensure deep cores.
- After aerating/fertilizing do not cut grass for 10-14 days. (You don't want to pick-up the fertilizer.)
- Water every two days for one week after aerating/fertilizing.
- The cores from the aerating can be left on the ground to break down back into the lawn.
- Watering 20-30 mins every 3-4 days is better than 10 mins every second day, (Constant short watering encourages shallow roots, deep infrequent watering encourages deep roots.)
- Impact sprinklers put out the most amount of water, in the largest area, in the least amount of time. Sprinklers that shoot water up in the air, (with the exception of butterfly sprinklers) are not efficient.
- Cut your lawn once a week in the growing season, (March-July) and once every two weeks in drier weather.
- Cut lawns no shorter than 3 inches (3-4 is preferred) during spring and summer. This helps keep your lawn greener, longer, even if you don't water.
- Leaving grass clippings on a lawn as a natural fertilizer can only be done if you cut your lawn regularly, the clippings are no longer than 2 inches, and they are not left in clumps. (Clumps will suffocate existing grass and cause the plants to fail.)
- If your grass has been let go, cut only 1/3 at a time, lowering the height each week until you reach 3 inches. (Cutting it short right away, removes all the green material where the plants food is stored and will cause the plant to fail.)
- You can cut your lawn 2-3 inches only in the winter months.
- Lawn cutting usually ends with the last cut in December. If you let it get long over the winter you will stress it with the first cut in spring.
- Lawn cutting usually resumes in February, one cut that month, and two in March.

Installing New Beds

- If you are cutting out a lawn area for gardens, with spray paint or a hose, lay out the pattern for your garden edge.
- Keep in mind lawn maintenance, and don't make sharp corners, or turns too tight for your lawn mower.
- With a flat digging spade, dig but do not cut out, the edge where you have marked.
- Move 1 ft in towards the center of the bed, and dig, but do not cut out, the edge around the entire perimeter again.
- Next, cut the 1ft. perimeter edge into 1ft. squares.
- Lift out the squares by shovel or by prying up with a fork. Haul away squares or compost.
- Once you have your perimeter edge removed, turn over the existing grass using the same method as you did for the perimeter.
- Re-dig the perimeter of the garden to maintain a straight, deep, edge.
- Next, bring in a suitable amount of "Garden Soil" not Top soil, Top soil is for Lawns.
- Keeping in Mind that your garden should be at least 6-8 inches higher than your lawn (allow for settling)
- Rake out area flat, while maintaining a sloped edge.
- Raised garden beds should be no smaller than 3 ft. wide at any point, 4 ft. usually small enough.
- Raised beds should always have a deep garden edge, (3-4 inches) separating the lawn or concrete from the garden.
- A garden should be raised and gently sloped or flat, and plants should never look like they are planted at the top of hills.
- Berm plantings are different, and should be at least 6-10 ft. wide.
- After planting, apply a layer of "Landscape Mulch" or some other form of mulch, (leaf mulch or compost) to hold in moisture, keep down weeds, and add organic matter to your garden.

Planting Trees and Shrubs

- Dig out a hole that is twice as wide, and twice as deep as the size of the plant.
- Partially back fill the hole with loose soil, or a compost mix. Now you can mix in bone meal, and/or a handful of fertilizer **(6-8-6)**
- Measure the height of the plant and the depth of the hole, before you lift the plant into hole, so you don't plant too deep, or too high.
- Every plant has a good side, note this before you back fill.
- The crown of the plant, (the part where the trunk meets the rootball) should always be 1 inch higher than the existing soil. To accommodate backfilling and mulching.
- If you bury the crown, the plant will eventually fail.
- Water thoroughly before back filling, but let water drain out of the hole first.
- Pack soil around base of plant firmly, but not so firm, that you compact the soil, and air cannot be exchanged through the root ball.
- Always stake trees for the first year.
- Add a layer of mulch and water in.
- When you are finished a large planting, re-dig your garden edge throwing the material back into the garden, and rake entire bed for a finished look.
- **Fertilize** all trees, shrubs perennials and hedges twice a year, **March & June.(10-20-10)**
- When Buying plants from a nursery, always look at the root ball. If the roots are coming out of the bottom of the pot and you can pull the plant from the pot with ease, it's probably root bound, and not a good buy. On the flip side, if you see brand new soil in the pot, and the plant is loose within the pot, this means that it was recently potted from a smaller size, and now they are selling you a 2 gallon size plant for the price of a 5 gallon.
- When choosing perennials from a nursery, always look for healthy plants that have more than one plant growing from the pot.
- When choosing shrubs, always look for the fullest plants with the best shaped branches (nothing broken)
- When buying large trees, never buy a tree with a broken top, or one that has been topped, or one with two branches competing for the top. Only small trees will have been topped for growing purposes.

Preparing Perennial Gardens

- Remove all weeds and loosen soil.
- Dig out garden edge to a depth of 3-4 inches.
- Add compost, aged leaf mulch, or well aged manures, and/or bone meal.
- Mix in by fork or rototiller.
- Rake out flat or gently sloping, while maintaining your garden edge.
- Plant perennials according to height (tall in the back and so on) and space 2 ft apart, depending on size of container.
- A closely planted perennial garden requires no staking of plants, (they hold each other up)
- Fertilize perennials with a slow release fertilizer (10-20-10)
- Cultivate twice a month, this helps with water and fertilizer absorption.

Preparing Annual Displays

- Plant annuals in rows using string line 6-10 inches apart
- Larger row plantings have more affect than one or two dotted throughout the garden, so choose certain areas within your garden, and designate them as places for annuals.
- Annuals also require more preparation and maintenance than other plants, so its best to keep them all in the same spot.
- Fertilize with a slow release fertilizer. **(10-20-10)** And water in well.
- Annuals should also be fertilized once a week with a water-soluble fert. **(20-20-20)** for the first month. And then twice a month, for one month. After that, they should be big and healthy, only requiring water.
- Cultivate once a week (before you fertilize), this helps with water and fertilizer absorption.

Preparation for New Lawns

- Remove weeds and/or lawn by scraping off or rototilling, or spray with Round-up.
- Rake out and remove any weeds, rocks and debris.
- Also rake out and remove any spots that are higher than 1 foot.
- Bring in new “**Top Soil**” from a reputable supplier, (some suppliers have poor product which is fluffed up with sand, and is full of weed seeds.) And fill area at least, 6 inches with new soil.
- Rake out level or gently sloping, with landscape or garden rake.
- Roll with lawn roller, to slightly pack soil, and to see where the low spots are.
- Rake again.
- Roll again
- Add a seed starter fertilizer (**10-20-10**) and then add your grass seed.
- Rake in straight lines with a leaf rake to bury some of the seeds.
- Roll again to compact seed with soil.
- Rope off area with bright string or survey tape.
- Water thoroughly.
- Water once in the morning and once in the early afternoon (more if its hot) for three weeks.
- Cut only when grass has grown at least 3 inches high.
- And then only cut ½ inch off, ensuring you never cut your grass shorter than 2 ½ inches, (3 inches is preferred during the growing season)
- The more times you rake and roll before seeding, the better the result.
- Grass mixes are better than a single type of grass because they are not as susceptible to pests and disease. ie: (Front yard mix, Back yard mix, Playground mix)
- Grass that does well in the sun, will not do well in the shade. For shade areas, look for a Deep Shade mix.
- Golf courses use a certain type of grass seed that is extremely high maintenance. This look cannot be achieved, by cutting your grass short and over fertilizing.
- Lawn installations should be started **after Easter** or **before Thanksgiving**. And are best started in the **Fall**. Winter rains, and a early jump on spring, are the advantages.
- Lawns should only be installed in the summer, if you have an irrigation system. Or if you are going to be home to water during the day.
- Planting sod is more “instant” but requires the same preparation and care.
- Installing lawns is time consuming and costly; skipping any steps will not work to your advantage.
- **Please use Round-up with caution, and mix according to directions. Round-up will only work when mixed at a 2% ratio (more is not better, it won't work) and it only works if it comes into contact with green material.**
- **The best way to use it is to cut weeds down to the ground, wait 1-2 weeks until they emerge small, and then spray on a sunny day that is not windy, early in the morning.**

Renovating an Existing Lawn

- Decide how much of your lawn you are going to renovate.(only low spots? Only weedy areas?)
- Lawns that are 60 % or more weeds qualify for complete renovation, anything less can usually be renovated a section at a time.
- **Do not use Weed & Feed.** It is harmful. And has been known to cause brain damage in children and animals. (it releases a low lying gas) And has been banned from all hospital grounds maintenance programs. **Fact.**
- Section renos are best done in Spring or Fall, after you aerate.
- Cut existing grass 2 inches high before you aerate.
- Lightly top dress empty patches & low patches (at least 2-4 inches)
- Rake out level, with landscape or garden rake.
- Roll with lawn roller, to slightly pack soil, and to see where the low spots are.
- Rake again.
- Roll again.
- Add a seed starter fertilizer (10-20-10) and then add your grass seed.
- Rake in straight lines with a leaf rake to bury some of the seeds.
- Roll again to compact seed with soil.
- Rope off area with bright string or survey tape.
- Water thoroughly.
- Water once in the morning and once in the early afternoon (more if its hot) for three weeks.
- Cut only when grass has grown at least 3 inches high.
- For Complete renos remove weeds and/or lawn by scraping off or rototilling, or spray with Round-up and then rototill.
- Rake out any weeds, rocks and debris.
- Bring in “Top Soil” (at least 4-6 inches) from a reputable supplier, (some suppliers have poor product which is fluffed up with sand, and is full of weed seeds.)
- Then follow steps for seeding.

Lawn Problems

- Thatch is a layer of dead grass which forms an impermeable layer, through which water and air cannot penetrate.
- Thatch is not a problem, but is a symptom of a problem. Thatch is caused by a combination of factors including, acidic conditions, pesticide use, which causes low microbial activity, (no living soil creatures) Poor aeration and drainage, and over use of artificial fertilizers. And can get worse, with shallow frequent watering, and the use of liquid fertilizers.
- A thick layer of thatch will prevent water from soaking into the soil beneath, causing the crowns of the plants to be wet, while the roots are too dry. This stresses the plants and makes them susceptible to pests and diseases. Causing further problems.
- Dethatching your lawn with a machine also creates stress for your lawn,(although temporarily) and should only be done in the fall. You can reduce the stress by top dressing with compost, and watering thoroughly.
- Most weed problems are caused by soil compaction, thatch, improper mowing practices, and improper watering. Following the fertilizing and maintenance schedule as outlined will diminish weeds over time. (If you neglect your lawn for two years, it will take you two, to get it back.)
- Clover is beneficial to the soil of your lawn because it actually replaces nitrogen back into the soil. Only remove if absolutely necessary.
- Moss occurs when the PH of the soil is too acidic and the area is too shady for grass to grow. Prune back trees and shrubs for good air circulation, and for light. Regular fertilizing and aerating, and apply lime in the winter after the last cut, or one month before the first fertilizing in spring.
- Never apply fertilizer and lime at the same time; it causes an adverse chemical reaction.
- Lime is a soil conditioner,(changes the PH over time) not a moss killer.
- Iron sulphate can be used with caution, to kill moss immediately. After the moss turns black, it should be raked out. This is something that you should only do once as a last resort, and never at the same time as fertilizing or liming. After that, a proper maintenance program should begin.

Composting

- Composts are an absolute necessity to any garden. Why pay to have material taken away, and pay to have new material brought in when you can make it yourself?
- Composting is easy, and requires very little time; the only work required is initially building the boxes.
- A proper system consists of 3 bins connected together, at least 3x3x3 each bin, 5x5x5 is preferred. The fronts are made to open with boards that you slide up and out, to remove.
- Once built, a proper three bin container system, should last 10-15 years.
- Compost is made by microbes and earth worms; you need to add the material to feed them.
- They require **moisture, air, carbon, & nitrogen.**
- **Moisture** by rains, and by watering in the dry months.
- **Air** By constantly turning
- **Carbon** is (dry/brown material like leaves, shredded newspaper, hay)
- **Nitrogen**, (green/wet material like grass clippings, kitchen compost, and weeds)
- If anything is missing from this list, or too much of one thing is used, your compost will not “Cook” properly.
- The only weeds that should not be put into compost are **Horsetail** and **Morning glory.**
- A properly “cooking” compost will generate enough heat inside to sterilize the soil, and kill any weed seeds. It will also be hot and wet, and will not attract mice or rats.
- Start by putting a layer of brown material on the bottom then a layer of soil, next a layer of worms which you can get from horse manure piles, then a layer of green. Continue the layers (brown, soil, green) throughout the season, any large amounts of material should be set aside and added over time. If you find you have a lot of material, you can speed the process by adding “Rot-It” which you can buy in stores.
- Spread material evenly throughout the bin, and water during dry spells.
- Continue until two bins are full, then start the process of turning, usually twice a year (spring and fall) The more you turn, the quicker the material will be ready.

Garden Designing

- When adding a new garden to your yard or rebuilding or extending an old one, think of the area the same way you would, when you decorate the inside of your home. Large shrubs and hedges are the walls, or back bone of your garden. Trees and medium size shrubs are the furniture, or the focal points, the pieces that you love, and want to show off. Perennials and annual flowers are the ornaments that you place in front of, and around your furniture. Any one element missing from the décor and you will have an incomplete design.
- Of course you will want your front yard looking well kept, to greet visitors and to keep the neighbors happy. Decide whether you would like to display your front yard to the street? In this case stand outside your property, and look in, your house is the walls, and any trees and shrubs are the furniture that you place in front, or around it, and so on.
- Or do you want to have your gardens display themselves towards your house so that you can enjoy them from inside your home, while giving you some privacy from your neighbors?
- When adding new gardens to your landscape, look at your yard from inside your house, and pinpoint the areas of your yard that you will see the most often, from windows or places inside that you spend the most time. Living or sitting rooms, and kitchens are good places to start.
- Outdoor patio/cooking areas should be looked at as well, when you sit and relax there, what part of your yard do you face?
- Start with landscaping these areas first. You will get the most satisfaction from these spots, because you will always see them. And these areas will receive the most attention because you will be constantly noting their appearance, and will want to have them looking their best for your own personal satisfaction.
- Over time you can connect these spots together, depending on whether you have the time, energy or finances, so that your gardens wrap around the perimeter of your yard. If not, at least every time you sit down, from a hard days work or gardening, you will be rewarded with a pleasant view.

Garden Designing Cont.

- When starting from scratch, purchase trees and large shrubs first. (You need a wall before you can put the furniture in.)
- When purchasing trees and shrubs it is worth the money to buy large. You need less to fill a garden spot, and small trees and shrubs are still nursery stock and need more time and attention to grow. Large plants need only to be maintained, small plants need to be nurtured. Decide what you will have time for?
- Plus you can always get small things from neighbors and friends once they see that you have taken an interest in gardening.
- Grocery stores, Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Canadian Tire, always have great deals on 1 & 2 gallon plants. Keep your eyes open.
- When planting a bed, or landscaping your entire yard, there are some general rules of design.
- **Overall Composition** has to do with Balance, Scale, Proportion, Interest and Rhythm.
- **Balance**; one on either side. Or, one off center, but the same type of plants on either side.
- **Scale**; Large yard or bed, requires large plants & objects within.
- **Proportion**; how the plant or object looks, in the overall picture.
- **Interest**; Focal points or things that stop your eye from moving for a moment.
- **Rhythm**; How your eye moves when you look at your garden. Does it flow from one end to the other? Or does your eye dot from one plant to the next? Never really seeing the whole picture, or resting.
- You can obtain some of these results by; grouping plants together in odd numbers, mostly 3, 5, and 7. Arrange plants, tall-med-small, to the left & right, and to the front to back, with single “special plants” and trees, being focal points, or places for your eye to rest.