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## DID YOU KNOW?

If your lawn and landscape plants seem greener after a thunderstorm, it isn't just your imagination. Each time lightning strikes, nitrogen in the atmosphere combines with either hydrogen or oxygen to form ammonium and nitrate (two different forms of nitrogen). This nitrogen is then washed to the ground in rainfall, where plants absorb it from the soil and use it for growth. Since nitrogen is a significant component of chlorophyll, which causes green pigmentation in plants, the plants grow greener after the storm.

It's estimated that about 250,000 tons of nitrogen are produced by roughly 1,800 thunderstorms every day!



*Lightning strikes can make plants greener!*

# The Best Offense is a Good Defense

## CRABGRASS CONTROL IS A MATTER OF PREVENTION

Crabgrass just can't take a hint. No matter how much work we put into keeping it out of our lawns, you can be sure that it will stage a comeback every year. This is a very aggressive annual weed, and just one crabgrass plant can produce thousands of seeds in a season.

The seeds germinate in the late spring and early summer. Once crabgrass plants start growing, they expand outward in circles that can reach 12" in diameter. The plants eventually die off in the fall, leaving behind dead areas in the lawn where new crabgrass seeds are likely to germinate again during the next growing season.

Crabgrass can make a mess of your lawn as it out-competes the good grass you want to have growing on your property.

It is lighter green in color and coarser in texture than desirable lawn grasses, so it can seriously detract from the uniformity of your lawn if it's allowed to gain a foothold.

### DEFENDING YOUR LAWN

Crabgrass has a harder time getting established in a thick, healthy lawn. In fact, lawns that are under-watered, under-fertilized and growing

thinly provide ideal growing conditions for this opportunistic weed. That's why proper lawn care practices are especially important.

Regular fertilization and sufficient watering (1" to 1 1/2" per week) will encourage a denser, more vigorous lawn that is less prone to crabgrass

invasion. Mowing the lawn high (removing no more than 1/3 of the grass blade each time) will be helpful too. This works against crabgrass by keeping the soil shaded (crabgrass seeds germinate more successfully in sunny conditions).

For an extra measure of protection, pre-emergent herbicides can be used to hinder crabgrass seed germination. By interfering with a key enzyme during the germination process, pre-

emergents make it much more difficult for crabgrass plants to grow. For best results, pre-emergents should be applied in the early spring before crabgrass seeds start sprouting. And if you're planning on seeding your lawn, it's a good idea to wait six to eight weeks after pre-emergents have been applied. Otherwise, they can prevent your new grass seed from sprouting as well.



*One crabgrass plant can produce thousands of seeds per season.*

#### REMEMBER...

- Crabgrass is very aggressive.
- Healthy lawns are less susceptible.
- Pre-emergents can hinder crabgrass growth.



## BEAUTIFUL PROPERTIES Take Teamwork

As we start a new growing season, we'd like to take just a moment to remind you that we'll need your help this year. The success of the services we provide depends on having a good working partnership with you, our valued customer.

We'll keep you informed of the basic services we're performing, and we'll let you know what you can do to help (such as mowing your lawn at the right height and watering your landscape plants in the absence of rainfall). Both our work and yours are needed to give you a lawn and landscape you'll love coming home to.

We'll be providing you with this newsletter and other important information all season long to help you get the most from your investment. As always, please feel free to call us anytime with your questions and concerns. We're looking forward to working with you, and we appreciate your business!



*Working together, we can help your property reach its true potential.*

## Planning the Perfect Patio

Patios make escaping to the great outdoors easy, since all you have to do is step outside! If you're thinking about installing a new patio, or revamping an existing one, there are many options to choose from in terms of materials and design. There was a time when the word "patio" meant nothing more than a square or rectangular area made of concrete, but that's no longer the case.

### MATERIAL SELECTION

The make-up of your patio can best be determined by the look and feel of your existing landscape. In other words, what will go best with your lawn, garden and home? Beyond concrete, you may want to consider bricks, stones, tiles, pavers or even gravel. Each of these materials has its own benefits, and each can fit in with a variety of landscape styles. The important thing is to make sure the materials you choose will complement your property rather than contrast it.

### DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

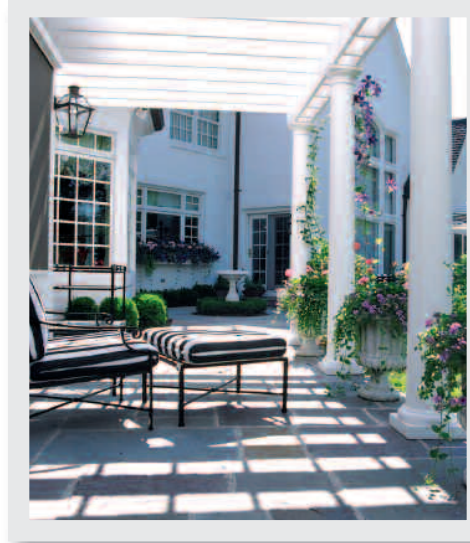
Once you've chosen the materials, it's time to think about the design of your patio. Among the many points to consider are:

- **Location** – Do you want your patio to be attached to your house, or would you prefer it to be a stand-alone element in your landscape? How much sun exposure do you want? Is the site you've chosen on even ground?
- **Maintenance** – A low-maintenance design that lends itself to easy cleaning will be ideal.
- **Shape** – Think beyond the square and rectangular designs of yesterday. A curved or geometric shape can add more visual appeal to your property and may lend itself to those tricky spots in your landscape.
- **Shelter** – Do you want to include a patio cover or awning for protection from the rain?

#### REMEMBER...

- The materials and design you choose should complement your existing landscape.
- Consider interesting shapes and textures for added visual appeal.

Above all else, be sure to take your time and think ahead. By planning carefully, you'll be much happier with the end result!



*The design of your patio should be dictated by how you want to use it.*

## Made in the Shade

### IS IT TIME TO CONSIDER A TURF ALTERNATIVE?

While trees are a vital component of any landscape, they do compete with our lawns for sunlight. Lawns do best when they get four to six hours of full sunlight per day. If shady conditions under trees presented challenges for parts of your lawn last year, it makes sense to consider some turf alternatives in those areas.

Ground covers or ornamental beds work well under trees when foot traffic isn't a concern. Plus, they look great and are easy to maintain. In cases where foot traffic is heavy, rock beds, stone pavers and even mulch beds can work instead.

Of course, there are still going to be areas on your property where turf is growing in shady conditions, and there are steps that can be taken to help it along.

- As always, a healthy lawn is the best defense against adverse growing conditions. Regular fertilization combined with proper mowing and watering will give your turf a strong foundation for growing under trees.

#### REMEMBER...

- Trees compete with turf for sunlight.
- If your turf is struggling in shady areas, you may want to try other options.

- Selective pruning and thinning of tree limbs will allow better penetration of sunlight to the turf below.
- Minimizing foot traffic in shady areas of your lawn will make it easier for turf to tolerate decreased sunlight.



*These hostas serve as an eye-catching turf alternative.*

- Overseeding of shady areas is a great way to improve turf density.
- You may want to consider reseeding with other turf cultivars that are more tolerant of shady conditions.

## L I G H T E N U P !

### LANDSCAPE LIGHTING MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

Even the most beautifully landscaped property is incomplete without the right lighting installed. Landscape lighting increases nighttime security while extending the enjoyment of your property into the evening hours. Plus, you can use lighting fixtures to accent certain areas of your landscape or enhance your outdoor space with interesting patterns and contrasts.

Used in strategic spots, the right lighting fixtures can make your nighttime landscape come alive. When choosing a lighting plan, you may want to consider some of the following:

- **UPLIGHTING** – a fixture illuminates an object from below.
- **DOWNLIGHTING** – a fixture mounted in a tree or high on a house shines down through the tree or on an object to accentuate its features.
- **PATH LIGHTING** – special fixtures mounted on short stakes shine light downward to illuminate a walkway or planting bed.



*Why stop enjoying your property just because the sun went down?*

- **BACKLIGHTING** – a background area is flooded with light so that objects in front of it appear as silhouettes.
- **SHADOWING** – a light fixture placed in front of an object illuminates it and casts its shadow on the background surface.

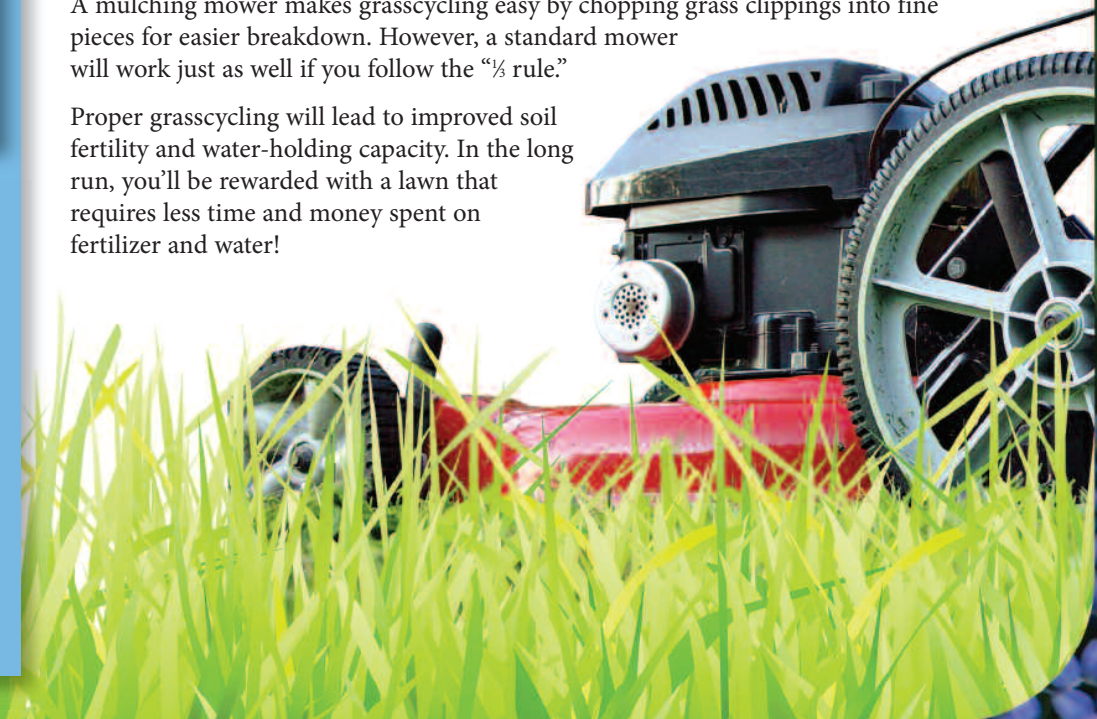
Experimentation is the key to finding the lighting plan that works best for you. Before you know it, you'll be looking at your landscape in a whole new light!

## Giving Back to Your Lawn

Grasscycling, or returning grass clippings to the lawn, is a great way to provide your turf with valuable nutrients in the form of organic matter. You don't want to go overboard, though. Proper grasscycling requires that you mow often enough so that no more than 1/3 of the grass blade is removed each time. A sharp mower blade is important too, and you should only mow when the grass is dry. Wet grass clumps up on turf and has a harder time filtering through to the soil to add nutrients to it.

A mulching mower makes grasscycling easy by chopping grass clippings into fine pieces for easier breakdown. However, a standard mower will work just as well if you follow the "1/3 rule."

Proper grasscycling will lead to improved soil fertility and water-holding capacity. In the long run, you'll be rewarded with a lawn that requires less time and money spent on fertilizer and water!





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## Beat the Disease

The warm, wet conditions of spring make your lawn especially vulnerable to fungus diseases. Some are relatively harmless, while others can destroy an entire lawn in a very short time. Fungus spores spread on lawn mower wheels, on children's shoes, on droplets of water that bounce from plant to plant during rainfall or watering, or in the wind.

If a fungus disease does appear, treatments can be applied that will suppress its activity. The goal is to keep the disease in check long enough for your grass to recover or for weather conditions to change.

However, it's best to try and prevent fungus diseases from gaining a foothold in your lawn. You can do this by keeping your turf healthy and growing with the practices shown at right.



Proper mowing, watering, feeding and thatch control measures help to prevent fungus diseases.



*Juniper trees are a great choice for a hardy, natural screen.*

### WHEN IT COMES TO PRIVACY, JUNIPER'S SUPER!

Looking for privacy, but don't want the added expense of installing a fence? Juniper trees may be the perfect solution. These coniferous plants come from the Cypress family. Depending on the species, they can be columnar to pyramidal in shape and narrow to broad in thickness.

Juniper trees can grow up to 25' in height and work great as a screen or hedge when planted in groups. Their wood is aromatic and they're very hardy, able to withstand unfavorable soil conditions and hot, dry weather. The female (fruit-bearing) flowers exist on one plant and male (pollen-bearing) flowers exist on another.

Since this shrub is an evergreen, it can provide privacy in your landscape throughout the year!