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Lawn and Landscape Maintenance Tips

Now that you've had a landscape professionally installed here are some tips to protect your investment and allow you to enjoy it for years to come!

- When plants are initially installed there is often a degree of transplant shock. Proper watering is essential for the health of your lawn and gardens. For best results apply water directly to the root ball to ensure complete saturation 2-3 times weekly. Irrigation systems and sprinklers may not provide sufficient saturation until there is root expansion into the surrounding soil media.
- Soil conditioning includes amending with organic matter and fertilizing. Application of hardwood mulch to a 2" depth once in the spring is sufficient. This will decompose and provide nutrients while protecting root systems in the heat of summer and freezing temps in winter. Application at the base of each plant with compost and/or N-P-K slow-release granular fertilizer is recommended in the spring. If plants are showing signs of stress correcting soil pH may be necessary. You can have the soil tested by a professional service or do it yourself with a kit obtained from the Cornell Cooperative Extension: <http://cce.cornell.edu/>
- Weeding landscape beds and shearing/ pruning of plants not only provides a manicured look, but also serves to benefit specimen plants. Weed species compete for resources and should be removed either mechanically or with an herbicide on a bi-weekly basis. Shearing and pruning of flowering plants is generally once per season after the bloom cycle. Shearing and pruning on evergreen plants is 2-3 times seasonally, or as required. Evergreen shrubs such as juniper and arborvitae should be tied with twine and/or burlapped for protection against winter wind damage.
- Perennials are non-woody plants that die back seasonally and return in the spring. Perennial plantings provide a low-maintenance solution with a diversity of color, textures and contrast. At the end of the season when the foliage has turned brown simply cut back to ground level. It is a good practice to mulch over perennials to protect their roots. Leaves raked up from your lawn can be used at no cost!
- If you are concerned about the health of a woody plant (tree or shrub) you can do a simple "scrape" test. Using a fingernail or a razor lightly scrape the surface of a branch. If it is green and the branch is flexible it is still alive. If it is brown and brittle the branch is dead and should be clean-cut with pruners.
- Plants that are properly cared for and planted in the right location are rarely affected adversely by insects and disease. If necessary, pesticides can be applied to the affected plant(s) or biological controls can be used such as introducing a predator insect to the landscape. Spiders are also nature's best pest control.
- Basic lawn maintenance includes again proper watering, especially in the hot and dry portion of the season. A deep watering (1" depth) once daily in the morning is sufficient for an established lawn. Purchase a rain gauge from your local garden center. If you have a newly installed lawn a second watering is recommended late afternoon, especially if the lawn is starting from seed. If you have sod installed DO NOT water in the evening as moisture that is left on the surface can promote fungus. In addition, mowing with sharp blades promotes root growth and a dense turf. If you notice tears and browning on stems the blades are dull and susceptible to disease. Mowing height can be 2 ½ inches in the spring and increased to 3" height in the summer to minimize stress on the plant. At the end of season remove all leaves and organic debris from the lawn before a final cut. A 5-step turf maintenance program is also recommended.

