



Virginia Cooperative Extension

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March Tips

LAWNS AND LANDSCAPING

by Diane Relf, Extension Specialist, Environmental Horticulture

- Walks and drives help guide the flow of foot traffic. When lined with borders, hedges, or other plant materials, they may become too formal and prominent in the landscape. Use enough plant materials to lessen the impact of large areas of pavement, but still allow grass to meet the pavement in areas.
- Early spring is the right time for two special turf treatments, if needed: vertical cutting or thinning to remove thatch and aerification or coring to reduce soil compaction. Special equipment is available for each operation. Consult a lawn-care specialist, or rent the equipment and do-it-yourself.
- Reposition stepping stones that have heaved or sunk below grass level. Lift them up, spread sand in the low areas, and replace the rocks. A bed of sand under the stones will aid drainage and decrease heaving next year.
- Take care to keep off soft and soggy lawns. Lime spreaders, wheelbarrows and other equipment will leave compaction marks. Seed new lawns and do repairs after the land has drained.
- When a blanket of snow insulates the lawn, temperatures at ground level may rise to above freezing. Snow mold fungi (a white, cottony growth on grass blades) thrives at temperatures between 32 and 65 degrees F. To reduce possible snow mold damage, remove heavy snow accumulations in shady areas. If you cannot physically remove the snow, spread ashes or dry peat moss on the snow. The dark-colored material will absorb solar radiation and melt the snow faster.
- Apply a pre-emergent herbicide before lawn weeds get started. These chemicals work by preventing the seed from germinating. Therefore, it is important that the herbicides be applied in early spring, before growth of the weed seedlings. Check with your local Extension agent for specific recommendations.
- Use crabgrass killer before forsythia blooms fade.
- Variegated plants can help add the illusion of light to a dark area. Shade-loving ground covers, such as variegated lirioppe, ivies, euonymous and hosta, can be very effective for this.
- Get your landscape design on paper. It's easier to erase it from a plan than to move it with a shovel.
- Shrubs and trees in the home landscape break up sound waves and reduce the nerve-shattering noise of modern society. Plant some new shrubs and trees this spring to improve the beauty and ambience of your home.

Monthly Tips have been prepared since 1986 by various staff of the Office of Consumer Horticulture including Ellen Bennett, Michelle Buckstrup, Susan Day, Susan DeBolt, Sharon Dendy, Kate Dobbs, Sheri Dom, David Gravell, Virginia Nathan, Jenny Shuster, Ellen Silva, and Ruth Sorenson. Resource material for the development of this information includes the Virginia Master Gardener Handbook; Extension Publications and newsletters from VCE, numerous other states, and the USDA; and an extensive library of over 900 books, magazines and journals. Project funded by The Virginia Gardener Newsletter subscription fees. Diane Relf, Project Director and Content Specialist.

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