

Early Spring



"In a world where thrushes sing and willow trees are golden in the spring, boredom should have been included among the seven deadly sins."

*~ Elizabeth Goudge,
The Rosemary Tree*

While the moral status of boredom is debatable, come springtime it is hard to stay bored for too long. As Mother Nature awakes from her winter rest, the warmer weather and longer days expel any excuses for lethargy. Our license to remain couch-bound has expired and it's time to venture outdoors and revive dormant greenspaces. The coming months will allow for more and more outdoor living, so now is the time to make outdoor spaces more livable. We hope that you will check out this issue's article which discusses some great ways to extend your living space beyond the walls of your home.

Hopefully you're as excited as we are about this season of transition. Give us a call any time with questions or ideas and we'll help your outdoor spaces reach their full potential.

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Outdoor Spaces You Can Call Home

Spring is upon us, and its warmer weather is a welcome change. When coupled with increased daylight hours, spring's balmy breezes make it hard to stay inside. Around this time, we're reminded that our home consists of more than just the house which gives us shelter. If you survey your property, chances are you will find real estate with untapped potential. With a little vision and guidance, your underused outdoor spaces can become dynamic living areas.

When considering possibilities for new outdoor living spaces, chances are that your budget is limited. The key is deciding a course of action. While the multitude of available options is exciting, the exercise of deciding on a course of action can be daunting.

To get the most value out of your budgetary dollar, the key is to ask yourself this question: How do I want to use this space?

If you can answer this question, you will be well on your way to envisioning the ideal development scenario. Do you want this space to be used for peaceful relaxation? Would you

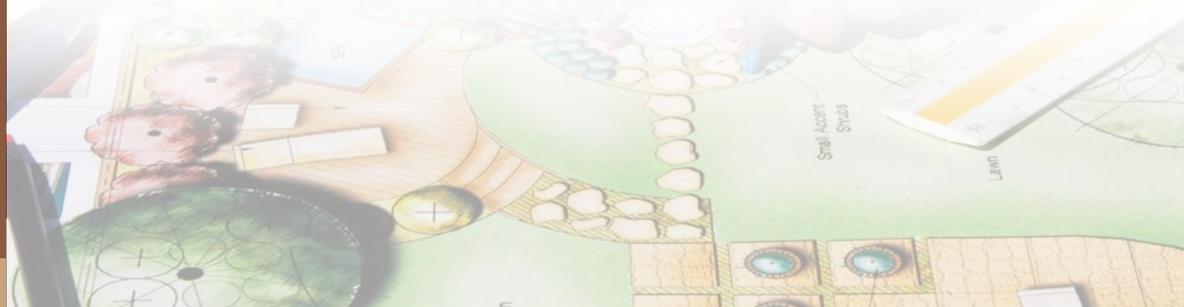
like your backyard to be a venue for long quiet afternoons with a book and a cool drink? If so, you may want to consider limited seating areas, with a focus on comfort and shade. If this is your vision, you may also want to add water features and maximize ornamental plants and hardscaping.

If you love to cook, you could install a deluxe grilling area or even an entire kitchen. This can be done in tandem with an outdoor dining area so that homecooked meals can be prepared and enjoyed amid sunshine and fresh air.

If you are a natural host and already enjoy entertaining, why not move the party outside? Extended paver stone patios and plentiful seating areas can turn

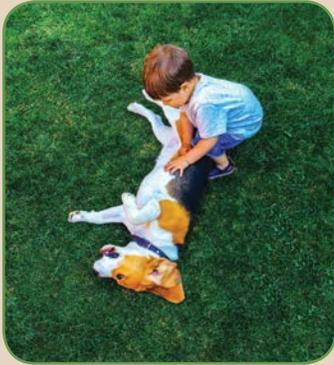
your backyard into an inviting gathering space. A firepit or fireplace provides a natural congregation area by offering light and warmth.

Expanding your living areas outdoors is a great way to make the most of your property. The nature of this expansion should be tailored to fit your unique vision, so now is the time to let your imagination roam.



FIND THE BALANCE WITH INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Doing away with harmful and invasive insects is a major goal when it comes to lawn care. In recent years, it has become obvious that simply carpet bombing your lawn with pesticide is a short-sighted, and potentially harmful method of pest control. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a method which employs preventative measures, effective diagnosis, and healthy cultural practices in addition to measured and selective pesticide treatments.



Following these steps will lead to a well-balanced attack on pests:

PREVENTION: Selecting plants that normally do well in the area gives them a big advantage in naturally resisting pest invasions and damage.

INSPECTION: Scheduled visits to check for brown patches, wilted plants, or other signs of damage and actual pest presence.

IDENTIFICATION: Once a pest or its damage is found, it's important to determine what kind it is. There are thousands of insect varieties, and many are beneficial. Care should be taken to target only the bad ones.

TREATMENT: Sometimes watering, good mowing habits and aeration (which opens the soil and thatch layer) are enough to combat the problem. If a large and damaging population of insects is present, focused pesticide treatments will also be recommended.

Crabgrass: A Hearty Adversary

While the new life and new growth of spring is both encouraging and exciting, some of this new growth is more than we asked for. Crabgrass is a particularly widespread and vigorous weed that can take over large portions of your lawn if left untreated. Originally brought to America as a forage grass for livestock in the 19th century, crabgrass has become a constant enemy of lawns and landscaping.



What makes crabgrass particularly challenging is that it spreads easily and can grow in extreme conditions.

Owing to its African origins, crabgrass can survive in very hot and dry conditions. Essentially, conditions in which turfgrass struggles, crabgrass thrives. To make matters worse, crabgrass is built to spread far and wide. One single clump of crabgrass can yield 150,000 seeds! Not only are these seeds plentiful, but like the plant itself, they are hearty. Crabgrass seeds can lay dormant in the ground for years and still emerge as viable plants once conditions are conducive for germination. Crabgrasses' durability and propensity to spread make it a threat to lawns everywhere.

Combatting such a tough customer requires a multi-faceted battle plan. Herbicide treatments go a long way in slowing the spread of crabgrass, but full eradication also requires ongoing attention towards the general health of your lawn. Both pre- and post-emergent herbicides can be useful against crabgrass. Here are a few things to keep in mind for each:

PRE-EMERGENTS:

- Apply to entire turf area early in the season before crabgrass has sprouted.
- Pre-emergents create a barrier that must be maintained if they are to be effective. Avoid heavy raking, de-thatching, or any other soil disruptions in the weeks following pre-emergent application.

POST-EMERGENTS:

- Used as a spot treatment.
- Effective on young and growing crabgrass and broadleaf weeds.

Although chemical treatments are very helpful, the biggest enemy to crabgrass is healthy turfgrass. **Crabgrass will not persist if your turf is rich and thick to begin with.** Mowing high, routine watering, and scheduled fertilization maximizes the health of your grass and minimizes crabgrasses' areas for opportunity.



Live Off Your Land by Growing Your Own Food

Along with the time and energy that many of us commit to our lawns comes a matching level of satisfaction. It's incredibly gratifying to enjoy the use of your property which has received a good deal of your attention. When you cultivate a garden and grow your own food, the satisfaction is physical. You truly get to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

Produce, on average, travels 1,500 miles to reach your local grocery store. There is a flavorful difference between store-bought veggies and those that are grown mere feet from your kitchen. When considering a garden, a great place to start is with the poster child of homegrown vegetables – the tomato. Indeed, if summer had a flavor it would be that of a juicy red tomato. Tomatoes can be grown in pots or in the ground, take up little space, can thrive in most regions, and have plentiful yields.

Other vegetable plants which produce a lot in a little space are green beans, sugar snap peas, and any one of a variety of



peppers. If you have enough space and ambition, an extensive vegetable garden offers even more opportunity for crops such as lettuce, kale, potatoes, cucumbers, and sweet corn. There are optimal layouts depending on the vegetables you'd like to include – if you go this route, professional guidance can be a big help. No matter how far you want to take your gardening, there is no denying the multi-faceted nourishment that comes with growing your own food.



'Living Screens' Provide Attractive Privacy



Most homeowners who have expanded their living spaces outdoors seek some source of privacy to accompany their new deck or patio. But traditional fencing can often appear institutional and off-putting – not to mention expensive. A great alternative or addition to traditional fencing is to employ landscape elements which can serve as 'living screens.' Here are a few additions which can add both privacy and visual appeal:

HEDGES:

Hedges can create solid barriers as well as a fence and can be as short or as tall as you like.

TRELLISES:

Both man-made and organic in nature, trellises allow light and air to permeate while also offering privacy and shade. A variety of vine plants can grow on trellises – you just need to make sure the trellis is sturdy enough to support whatever plant it's supporting.

TREES:

Strategically placed small trees which branch out at the base can create privacy as well. Magnolias, Japanese maples, flowering dogwoods, and birch are good options.

MOUNDS OR BERMS:

Earthen elevations covered with plants provide a unique, organic privacy. Gradually sloping embankments or mounds blend into the rest of your landscaping, and give the impression that they're naturally occurring.

An element of privacy makes any outdoor space intimate and inviting – truly an extension of your home. In addition to standard fencing, there are several landscape elements which provide natural beauty along with privacy. Consult a professional and decide which option is right for you.





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Spring Cleanup Checklist

With winter finally behind us, there are a few steps that should be taken in order to equip your lawn as best as possible for the new growth of spring:

- Dead leaves and debris should be removed from all beds. It is much easier to do this before perennials are in bloom and easily damaged.
- Prune dead or dying branches from trees and shrubs. In early spring, before leaves have bloomed, it is much easier to identify wood that should be removed. Timely pruning also ensures that new growth will be directed towards the optimal areas.
- Beat the rush for mower service and blade sharpening. Most people won't seek mower maintenance until rapid spring growth makes mowing a necessity. Attend to your power equipment now and be ready to roll when your turf demands attention.
- Rake brown dead spots of grass. Removing dead or dying grass helps stimulate new growth.