



"Summer afternoon – summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language."

~ Henry James

Together those two words carry with them far more meaning than either does by itself. We value summer afternoons for their rarity – which is warranted given that they account for only 6.4% of the calendar year. The thought of summer afternoons conjures up thoughts of pools, picnics, sun-drenched ball parks and the scent of sunscreen. The common thread that links all of these images is the outdoors. Wistful daydreams about summer afternoons are seldom set in a dark air-conditioned living room.

Developing your outdoor spaces is the key to maximizing your time spent outdoors. In this issue, we explore ways to make the outside just as inviting as any room in your house. Together we can make sure that you are fully prepared to make the most of this wonderful time of the year.

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Keeping Your Grass Greener Since 1989



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Backyard Vacation

Every year when summer arrives, peoples' general attitude shifts to that of enjoyment and relaxation. At some point, most people will disappear for awhile as they enjoy an out-of-town vacation.

This vacation is a highlight of the year where good times are had and memories are created. Wouldn't it be great if you could create a similar experience every day throughout the summer? With a little help, you can turn your backyard into your own vacation oasis to be enjoyed all summer long.

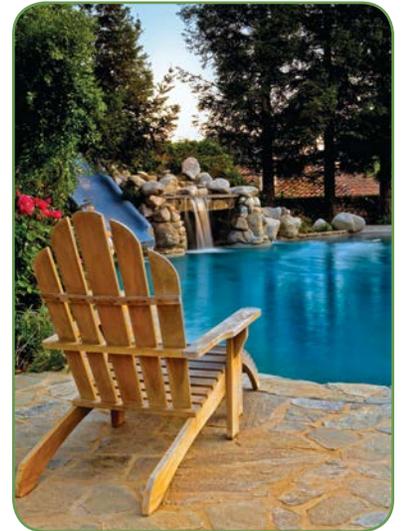
The term 'hardscaping' refers to landscaping features that are permanently established and typically non-living. Patios, water elements, fire pits and outdoor shelters all fall into this category. Hardscaping additions can turn an underused area of your lawn into an inviting living area which draws you outdoors and allows you to fully enjoy the warm weather months.

The key to getting the most out of your hardscaping is proper planning. The first step to effective planning is to decide what you want from your new space. Will this be a quiet peaceful retreat?

Will you want to host large gatherings here? Smaller ones? Will this be the family dining area for the summer? Once you know what you want, you can begin to flesh out a plan.

The possibilities for what you can add are limited only by your imagination (well OK, your budget as well). Your available options can range from the modest (fire pits, small decks) to the extravagant (pools, outdoor kitchens) – and any combination in between. It is not uncommon to have a vision that exceeds your immediate resources. If this is the case, it can help to formulate a long-term plan for multiple installations spread out over a long period of time. With the proper planning, you can enjoy each new addition as it comes without ever dealing with an incomplete or unfinished look.

More than any other season, summer is meant to be spent outdoors. It is a time full of activities and adventure. But when you boil it all down, we still spend most of our time at or near our homes. Fortunately, your backyard can become a vacation destination all its own that can be enjoyed every day.



LANDSCAPE LIGHTING: A BRIGHT IDEA

In planning your landscaping, don't forget what your yard will – or could – look like after the sun goes down. The right lighting can add an entirely new dimension to your landscaping that will increase both the functionality and visual appeal of your outdoor spaces.

Lighting can use your larger landscape features and your house itself to create dramatic shadows or silhouettes. Different effects can be created by up-lighting a shrub or tree (shining light from the ground up) or by down-lighting it (shining light down from overhead). The right illumination can also transform an otherwise neglected porch or patio into an inviting living space for warm summer nights.



The benefits of landscape lighting are more than just cosmetic. Pathway lighting along walkways or steps can go a long way towards improving your home's safety. A well-lit property has been proven to be a less attractive target for burglars and trespassers.

Even a simple lighting system can create an impressive visual effect while also providing safety, security, and increased usability for your property.

What Does Fertilizer Do?



If you are reading this, chances are that you are familiar with the idea of fertilizing your lawn. You've likely heard that it is a key part of successful lawn care, and something that you should probably do. But what purpose does fertilization really serve? Why is it seemingly so important? These are important questions whose answers can help guide your plan of action.

Like you and I, plants need food in order to live and grow. Whatever we eat is broken down to its most basic components and then used by our bodies to carry out a variety of functions such as growing new tissue or giving us the energy to go about our daily life.

Turfgrass is built to gather its food from the soil, extracting nutrients from the ground through the roots. Fertilizer provides turf with the same nutrients it collects from the ground, but in a highly refined and accessible form.

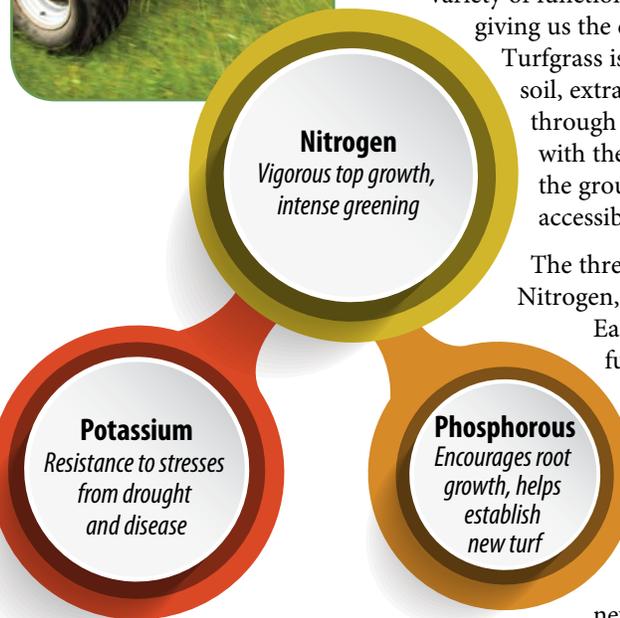
The three active ingredients in fertilizer are Nitrogen, Phosphorous*, and Potassium.

Each one of these performs a different function in creating healthy turf.

Nitrogen is the primary active ingredient in turf fertilizer.

Amino acids are the building blocks of all plant and animal cells, and all amino acids contain nitrogen. Increased nitrogen levels encourage rapid

new growth and dramatic greening of the turf. Phosphorous helps the turf

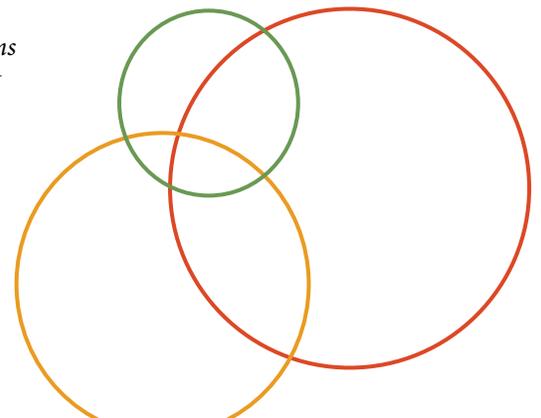


create organic compounds which result in large, strong roots. It also helps the plant produce chlorophyll which is essential to the process of turning water and sunlight into energy (photosynthesis). Potassium helps turf build valuable proteins that strengthen turf against stresses such as drought and disease. The ratio of these three ingredients in any fertilizer vary. The ideal mix depends on the condition of your soil, as well as the age and overall health of your lawn.

The goal of fertilization is to give your lawn the necessary nutrients to achieve vibrant beauty now, and sustained health for the long run. The challenge is to diagnose your lawn's needs so that it gets what it needs without going overboard (and possibly damaging your turf).

GIVE US A CALL TODAY, AND WE WILL COME UP WITH A FERTILIZATION PLAN THAT IS JUST RIGHT.

**Due to potential contribution to algae blooms in water, fertilizers with Phosphorous are not available in some states.*



The RIGHT Height to Mow

In the summer, it is tempting to drop the blade height on your mower to the lowest setting in an effort to drop the number of needed mowings. Mowing lower means mowing every other week, right?! Wrong.

While reduced mowing frequency may be nice, mowing too low (or ‘scalping’) jeopardizes the health of your turf. During the dog days of summer, grass blades provide shade to the soil beneath them, cooling the ground and providing relief from the scorching sun. Your lawn’s root systems greatly benefit from this cool shade. It allows the roots to go about their business without drying out. This valuable shade is eliminated when a lawn is scalped.

Another problem with mowing too low is that in doing so, you are removing the turf’s ‘power plant.’ Grass blades turn water and sunlight into much needed energy. When too much of the blade is removed, the turf’s energy supply is reduced – compromising its overall health.

Setting your mower to only remove one third of the blade height per mowing gives a well-manicured look while still leaving your lawn thick and healthy. So give your lawn its due without overdoing it and raise your mower blade. A few extra mowings will be worth it in the long run.

Cut Here!

Not Here!

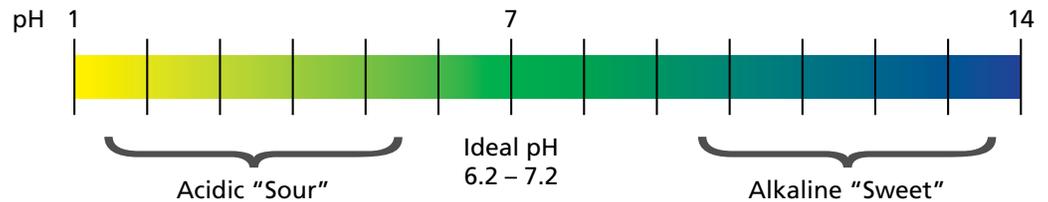
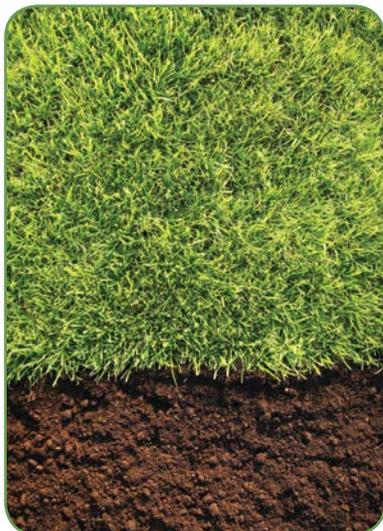


Put Soil to the Test

As you plan and care for your lawn and garden, your main focus is usually the plants themselves, and whatever care they may require. But to have the best ‘above-ground’ results, it is important to be mindful of the soil itself.

Healthy soil will yield healthy plants, while plants in damaged soil will have difficulty thriving. Testing your soil is a great way to gauge your soil’s wellbeing. A soil test can measure the overall nutrient content of your soil, as well as the larger issue of soil acidity. For a complete test, you will likely need to contact a local extension office of a local or regional university. To test the acidity, you can purchase a kit from a local garden or hardware shop.

So what is soil acidity and why is it so important? Soil’s acidity is defined by its pH level. Low pH soil is referred to as acidic (or ‘sour’), while high pH soil is alkaline (or ‘sweet’). Your turf grows best in soil that is neutral or only slightly acidic. pH levels that are too high or too low present different problems and require specific remedies. The diagram and table (below) give a summary of how pH level affects your soil’s viability and what you can do to correct the level if necessary. Happy testing!



	Acidic (Low pH)	Alkaline (High pH)
Location	Eastern US, Pacific Northwest Alaska, Hawaii	Central and Southwest US (generally dry areas)
Threats to Turf	Reduces efficacy of fertilizers Encourages weeds and thatch build up	Reduces nutrient absorption
Remedies	Add lime	Add sulfur or gypsum



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Dig In Against Grubs

Of all the threats your lawn faces, grubs are one of the most common and the most detrimental. Once present in large numbers, grubs feast upon your turf's root systems and can kill large sections of your lawn. The key to avoiding grub disaster is knowing your enemy and acting accordingly.

Grubs are thick, white worms that are about an inch long and very hungry. Mid-summer marks the start of grub activity with their feeding cycle peaking in the early fall.

Preventative grub treatment applied prior to the season can rid your lawn of grubs before their eggs even hatch. Without a preventative application, the trick to staying on top of grubs is regular inspections throughout the season. If you think you might have grubs, grab a handful of the suspect turf and pull it up. If it comes up like a loose carpet, there is a good chance that grubs have disconnected the turf from the ground. If this is the case, you will see grubs hanging out between the turf and the soil.

Not all instances of grubs demand action, in fact five or less grubs per square foot of turf is thought to be a 'safe' amount. More than that will require some sort of treatment. Timing is crucial for most grub treatments. You won't know that you need a treatment until you see signs of damage, but if the damage is extensive, it may be too late. If you're unsure of the best course of action, give us a call today and we'll be happy to assess your situation.

