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Annual Maintenance Guide for Lawn and Garden Areas

Spring Lawn and Garden Care:

Lawn

Be sure mower blades are sharp

Topdress with compost or apply organic fertilizer or compost tea to all lawn areas

Overseed lawn areas that are thin or winter-killed

If desired, harvest dandelions, creeping charlie, and other edible weeds from lawn areas for spring salads, soups, or teas or leave them in place for the bees. Later in the season, they will be bitter and less tasty.

If crabgrass is a problem, apply crabgrass preventer when the Forsythia are in bloom (April 15th or so)

De-thatch and aerate only if needed or if lawn areas are heavily compacted

Garden

Sharpen all tools and tune up garden machines

Remove tree guards and other winter protections from the garden

Cut back dead plant material and mulch back into the garden. Consider purchasing a small electric shredder to convert this material into a fine mulch. Otherwise, just lay it down in the garden and let it decompose, and the new growth will come up through it

Amend soil with organic matter (compost/compost tea)

Spread shredded bark mulch as needed

Divide overcrowded perennials

Prune off any dead/diseased growth from trees/shrubs (woody plants) and burn or dispose of this material

Prune Summer Flowering Shrubs

Seed cool season crops like spinach, radishes and direct plant onion bulbs and potatoes

Plant fruit trees, berry shrubs, and any bare root plantings

Summer Lawn and Garden Care:

Lawn

Mow as needed to a height of approximately 3.5" (helps with drought tolerance)

Mulch lawn clippings back into the lawn



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Apply compost tea/organic fertilizer around the fourth of July

Keep mower blades sharp

Garden

Plant warm season annuals like Tomatoes, Peppers, and Zucchini

Weed garden areas. Mulching in areas not planted will help reduce weeding maintenance by about 70%

Water new garden areas unless it has rained over 1" per week. Water established perennial garden areas only in times of drought.

Water trees, especially newly planted ones, about once per week. Slowly soak to saturate the soil to a depth of 18". Watering trees with overspray from an irrigation system promotes shallow root development. Soak trees individually to promote deep root growth.

Prune (a light haircut) shrubs after the first push of new growth. Be cautious with overpruning fruiting, woody plants like raspberries, aronia, and serviceberry.

Prune ornamental shrubs (like lilac and weigela) after the plant has flowered.

Leave spent flower heads on the plants so the birds can eat the seeds, or dead-head them if you prefer a tidier look.

Cut back and dispose of any dead or diseased growth.

In late summer (August), sow a second wave of cool season veggies like spinach, lettuce, and radishes

Enjoy your beautiful gardens. Harvest ripe fruits or veggies. Cut flowers to bring inside the house.

Fall Garden Maintenance

Lawn

Continue Mowing to a height of approximately 3.5" and ensure that mower blades are kept sharp

Aeration is best in fall as most annual weed seeds will not germinate this time of year. If soil is compacted, aeration is very helpful to remediate this problem.

Water lawn areas if it does not rain 1" per week.

Apply your last dose of organic fertilizer or compost tea around September/October

If deemed necessary, manage broadleaf weeds (thistle, dandelion, creeping Charlie, etc.) by spot spraying them with an herbicide like Gallery, Triclopyr, or others. Or you could just leave them for the pollinators

Overseed any thin spots in the lawn

Winterize lawn equipment by running the gas out of them and tune them up for winter storage.



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Garden

Weed all garden areas

Place protective cages/tree guards to protect from rodents, deer, etc.

Harvest all annual vegetables and clean out annual garden beds

Plant spring flowering bulbs if desired

DO NOT prune/trim evergreens or spring flowering shrubs unless removing dead/diseased growth

Continue regular watering as needed

Rake leaves from lawn areas and either compost them or shred them and use them as mulch in garden areas. Dispose of diseased leaf material in the garbage or haul to a hot composting location.

Harvest and enjoy fall bearing fruits like apples, chokeberries, and pears.

Sharpen and clean all garden tools to prepare for winter storage.

Blow out irrigation systems and drain and disconnect hoses

Leave perennial plant material in place unless it is diseased. Beneficial insects will overwinter in the plant stalks, and birds will eat the seeds from flowering plants and grasses. This makes for more winter interest in function in the garden spaces.

Winter Garden Maintenance

Relax and enjoy your winter garden. There is very little to do.

If pests like deer and rabbits are a problem, consider spraying a product like "Liquid Fence" in addition to the cages and tree guards you have placed.

Winter is the best time to prune almost all woody plants (trees and shrubs). It is best to do pruning on a mild winter day when the temperature will not drop below 10 degrees Fahrenheit for the 48 hours following the pruning work. This will prevent frost damage to the newly pruned wood.

Plan your additions to your garden spaces in the coming Spring!

Hardscape Maintenance

Keep rock, cobble, and gravel areas free from sediment by blowing them out with a leaf blower on a weekly basis. This will help prevent sediment (including weed seeds) from depositing in these areas.

Keep brick and stone areas free of dirt and grime by blowing these areas off weekly with a leaf blower. Washing them once or twice a year (be careful not to get too aggressive or the joint sand will be removed from in between the stones/bricks) is also very helpful in prolonging the life of these spaces.
