

Getting Your Garden Ready for Spring

Here are some tips on preparing your Alberta garden for Spring:

Pruning

Prune in Spring EXCEPT FOR: maple, birch, and Spring flowering shrubs. As a general rule, prune no more than 1/3rd of the plant at a time.

Why - Pruning is done to get rid of dead wood, encourage better blooms, fruit and foliage, and to reduce size,

Pruners - There are bypass pruners and anvil pruners. Bypass are the better choice as there is less risk of crushing the stems as they are being cut. Try to buy as best quality as you can afford.



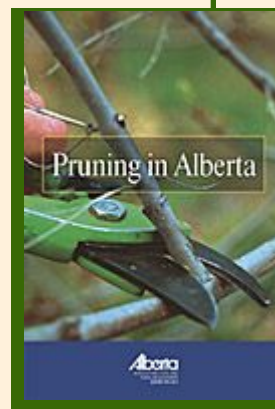
Pruning Steps

Make sure your pruners are as sharp as possible. Look at tree, decide what needs pruning focusing on dead wood, crossing branches, excess branches and any dead or diseased branches. Contrary to popular belief, pruning paint does not have to be used; if the cut is made clean and is small enough, the tree will be able to heal itself properly. NEVER leave stubs.

Do not prune Elm in between March 31st and October 30th to help reduce the spread of Dutch Elm Disease.

Prune Maple and Birch after leaves unfurl – otherwise, if they are pruned too early, they will bleed sap.

Prune Spring flowering shrubs such as lilac after they bloom. If they are pruned before they bloom, there will be little if any blossoms. An excellent reference book for further details is called "Pruning In Alberta" which sells for \$4.99, published by Landscape Alberta Nursery Trades.



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Fertilizer

There are granular, water soluble, slow release and liquid fertilizers. The many varieties include fertilizers for lawns, trees/shrubs, annuals, perennials and vegetables.

The three numbers always refer to the following elements in the same order all the time.

Nitrogen – encourages growth of leaves, stems and helps the plants to 'green' up.

Phosphorous – encourages root development & flowers.

Potassium – all around growth, ties in first two, helps plants ward off disease.

Preparing Soil

Incorporate LOTS of organic material (if none has been added) such as compost, soil booster, peatmoss. This improves aeration, drainage and helps with nutrient exchange.

Be careful with too much manure – can be too acidic

Mushroom Manure – can be high in soluble salts; better not to use it unless you are ABSOLUTELY sure it is free of salts etc.

Testing soil – good way to check PH and nutrient content. An imbalanced PH – under 6.5 and over 7.5 will hinder the plant's ability to absorb nutrients and grow properly.

Do not dig or rototill when soil is very wet or very dry – it will damage structure of soil.

Bags of Sea Soil and Soil Booster are very effective amendments to help lighten heavy soil.

Zeolite or Gypsum will help improve clay soil. NEVER add sand to clay based soil.

Second Nature Compost is available in bulk from Greenland. This rich compost is made by the City of Edmonton - it will revitalize tired or heavy soils.



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Fertilize with fertilizer such as Garden Pro 10-15-19 or something high in the middle and last numbers.

To eliminate weeds, use Round-Up, Wipe Out, or Organic Elimaweed before planting. Allow product to completely kill the green growth for 7-10 days, then rototill.

Lawns

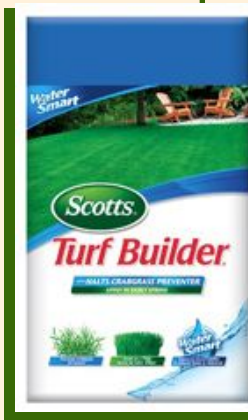
Don't rake/dethatch until grass is dry enough (light raking to get rid of snow mold is okay). If you walk on the lawn and you don't leave footprints, it is dry enough to rake. If you do leave footprints, it is too wet to rake.

Aeration can be done every year by manual means and every second year by power means.

above are DISINFECTED to prevent spread of such diseases as Fairy Ring.

such as Scotts 20 – 27 – 5 (organic base/slow release). Be careful of quick release fertilizers as these can burn the lawn. After applying the fertilizer, water in very well.

Once grass is actively growing, (mid to 3rd week in May) apply slow release lawn fertilizer such as Scotts Turf Builder 29 – 3 – 4.



Weed Control in Lawns

A thick lawn that is cut often and properly watered will naturally resist weeds.

Use systemic, selective weed killers such as Killex. When sprayed, Killex is absorbed into the plants leaves and then into the roots, killing the weed right down to the roots. It only kills broadleaf weeds such as dandelion, plantain, etc. but does not kill grass. If quack grass is a problem in your lawn, Roundup can be applied CAREFULLY by painting on with a diluted solution. Roundup is a non selective herbicide (it will kill anything green that it hits). It is an effective herbicide for all perennial weeds such as quack grass, thistle, etc.

If using lawn fertilizer with weed control, use drop spreader and be careful not to get on flower beds, shrub beds or vegetable garden.



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Pests

To get rid of aphids, mites etc. – rake up last years leaves from beneath shrubs etc.

Use dormant oil as a preventative to kill such pests as aphids (which overwinter as eggs on stems of trees and shrubs), scale, etc. Prune out any damage or possible infestation noticed. i.e. Black Knot of Cherry, caterpillar eggs (seen as rings) etc. Watch plants closely removing pests early so they don't get a chance to reproduce (i.e. Delphinium Worm, sawflies etc).

Perennials

Cut back all brown and dead material to ground. Fertilize with high middle number (i.e. 15 – 30 – 15)

Perennials such as daylilies, etc. can be split up at this time providing the ground is dry enough and growth has come out a few inches. Simply dig up with a sturdy garden fork and split apart into halves or quarters. If the clump is thick and cannot be split easily by hand, simply take two garden forks back to back, push down through the center of the clump and pry apart.

For more detailed information, see us at Greenland, call 780 467-7557
or visit our website at greenlandgarden.com.

Click on 'Ask An Expert' where you can email us your questions.



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