

Realty Landscape Corporation

Suggestions for Care of Lawns and Landscapes

Thank you, and congratulations on having your new landscape professionally installed by Realty Landscaping Corporation. We know you will enjoy your investment for years to come. The following suggestions are provided to help you to understand some of the steps required to care for your new landscape. These suggestions are not 100% comprehensive and it should be realized that various plant species have different cultural requirements. We have provided this information as an overview and to give you a starting point for finding more specific information regarding care of your particular landscape. If you desire to do so we recommend taking some time to research your specific plants to better comprehend how to care for them. Otherwise Realty employs horticulture professionals who can be hired to help maintain your investment on a yearly basis. Please contact us to discuss available maintenance options.

Lawn Care

1. New Seed lawns

- Your new seed lawn should germinate in 7-14 days. Germination is dependent on air/soil temperatures and moisture.
- When applying water no run off or puddling should occur, as this will cause seed to wash away.
- Water 2-3 times daily until the grass reaches 1".
- After the grass reaches 1-2" in height, water only once per day but double the watering time per zone.
- Actual watering times and frequencies should be adjusted depending on seasonal temperatures or rainfall amounts.
- People, children, and pets must be kept off the new lawn until after the first mowing (usually around 4-6 weeks).
- Make sure that you suspend watering so that your lawn is dry the day that you cut it.
- Fertilize your new seed lawn after it has been mowed four times. After that we recommend fertilizing 4 times per year using the schedule for established lawns.

2. New Sod Lawns

- Water twice daily for the first two weeks.
- In the third and subsequent weeks, water only once per day but double the watering time per zone.
- To test if you are properly watering your new sod lawn, pull back a piece of sod that has not rooted yet and check to see that the soil underneath is damp but not saturated. If the soil is dry or saturated adjust your watering periods accordingly.
- Actual watering times and frequencies should be adjusted depending on seasonal temperatures or rainfall amounts.
- Make sure that you suspend watering so that your lawn is dry the day that you cut it.
- Fertilize your new sod lawn after it has been mowed four times. After that we recommend fertilizing 4 times per year using the schedule for established lawns.

3. Established lawns

- **Watering**
 - The frequency of irrigation depends on the type of grass, the soil's physical properties, and the climatic condition - especially rainfall, humidity, temperature, and wind movement.

- Many turfgrass problems may be attributed to improper watering. Perhaps one of the most important factors contributing to improper watering is frequent irrigation - watering too often. Newly seeded areas would be the exception to this comment.
- On most general turfgrass areas the time to apply moisture is just as the plants begin to wilt.
- Water deeply to promote deep rooting and healthy, vigorous turfgrass. Shallow and frequent watering allows grass to survive with minimal root growth and results in weak, sickly turf that is prone to disease, insect attack, and damage from traffic.
- **Fertilization**
 - In most cases, turfgrasses require nutrients in the ratio of approximately two parts nitrogen to one part phosphate and one part potash.
 - We recommend fertilizing 4 times per year using a 10-6-4 fertilizer. One early summer, one late summer and two fall applications are suggested.
 - If your soil is too acidic agricultural limestone can be applied in the fall or late winter to adjust the pH.

4. Lawn Pests and Other Damage

- Improper maintenance practices can weaken turf and make it more susceptible to pests in the form of insects, fungi, bacteria, nematodes, and weeds. Proper care of your lawn is the most important step in preventing pest damage.
- The cause of turfgrass damage is often difficult to determine if considerable time has elapsed between damage and diagnosis. Damage is often blamed on disease or insects when there is no sound basis for such a diagnosis.
- Over fertilization, under fertilization, herbicide injury, water stress, and chemical damage (i.e. salt) may cause injuries resembling those caused by pests. Don't just assume you have a pest problem talk to a professional. Soil compaction and extreme temperatures may also create problems.
- If you notice problems with your lawn notify Realty in a timely manner so as to limit any damage that may occur.
- All organisms should not be eliminated from any garden. Some are actually beneficial because they prey on detrimental ones or compete with them for space. It is when pest populations increase and become a nuisance that we intervene. Indiscriminate applications of pesticides may reduce beneficial organisms and result in higher pest populations.

5. Landscape Care of Woody Shrubs and Trees

- **Watering**
 - Watering newly installed plants is essential for plant survival. The amount and frequency of watering depends on many factors including soil type and texture, rainfall, temperature, and plant location (sun vs. shade).
 - As with lawns light surface watering will encourage undesirable shallow root growth. Resulting in plants unable to cope with dry spells. Soaking the backfill soil around the root ball to the depth of the roots is most desirable.
 - In soils with poor drainage care should be taken to not drown the plant by filling the planting hole with water. This will prevent gas exchange in the root zone depriving the roots of oxygen. Over watering may also lead to root rots caused by fungi or bacteria resulting in extensive damage to the root system and ultimately death of the plant. Plant roots will go dormant in drought and spring back to life when water is present but water soaked roots will begin to rot and cause irreversible damage.
 - It is best to water so that the soil is allowed to remain moist but not soaked. This usually turns out to be a rate of one watering every 5-7 days during the first growing season. Once established most ornamentals should be able to survive on rainfall water except in times of severe drought.

- Water should be applied slowly by allowing water to slowly trickle into the root zone. This can be accomplished using a hose turned on slightly and allowed to sit on top of the root ball for about ten minutes for shrubs and 20 minutes for trees. Watering bags or milk jugs with small holes in the bottom can also be used. A good rule of thumb is to apply 1-2 gallons per inch of trunk caliper.
 - Once established it is also advisable to extend the watering area outward from the root ball to encourage root growth outward into the soil.
 - A watering wand is an excellent tool to use for quick and efficient watering of plants; you can purchase one at most home centers.
 - Soil moisture can be checked using a hand held moisture meter, which can be purchased at most home centers.
- **Fertilization**
 - Over fertilizing like over watering will allow the plant to survive with minimal root expansion and ultimately result in a plant unable to cope with stress. As with animals plants need to exercise to be healthy. Plants exercise by growing roots and shoots in order to collect water, nutrients, and sunlight. If too much water and nutrients are readily available the plants won't be stimulated to seek more.
 - Fertilization can begin after the first growing season for most ornamentals and after two seasons for trees. We recommend a light application of slow release fertilizer with a nitrogen: phosphorus: potassium (N: P: K) ratio of 3:1:1 or 3:1:2 in the fall after leaves have started to change color. Some examples of 3:1:1 and 3:1:2 N: P: K fertilizers are 18:6:12, 15:5:5, and 24:8:16.
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 - Application rates should supply approximately 2-4 pound of available nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of surface area under plant canopy. For example, if using 18:6:12 fertilizer 1-2 pounds of fertilizer would be enough for roughly 100 square feet.
 - Fertilizer should be sprinkled evenly around the drip line of plant. This is the area of most active root growth. Dumping fertilizer near the base of the trunk is ineffective because roots are not concentrated in this area. The plant should be watered thoroughly after fertilizing.
 - Too much fertilizer will chemically burn the plant resulting in death. Follow the fertilizer manufacturer instructions and don't apply too much.
 - Natural fertilizers such as Holly Tone are very beneficial to evergreens. Since they are naturally based products, their ability to burn plants is greatly reduced.
 - Fertilizers designed for enhanced root growth are extremely beneficial. These products stimulate bacterial and fungal development, which encourage vigorous root growth. This enhanced root growth will result in healthier plants.
 - **Pruning**
 - Most ornamental plants need regular pruning after the first few years to insure the correct shape and natural growth habit for the area they are in. Pruning is also important to maintain the health of the plant. It removes diseased and damaged branching, helps air circulate while letting sunlight in, and stops structural problems in future plant growth.
 - Some plants will require hand pruning, while some will tolerate power shears, each results in a slightly different effect on your overall landscape. Many plants in a formal setting are pruned with power shears. For a natural look, pruning with hand clippers is most effective, but is more time consuming.
 - Pruning can be done at any time of year but flowering shrubs should only be pruned after flowering to ensure the maximum effect of the flowers in the landscape. The post flowering pruning should be done in a timely manner so as not to disturb flower buds being produced for the following season.
 - Many shrubs, annuals, and perennials benefit from deadheading- the removal of spent flowers from the plant. Removing dead flowers in many cases will extend the flowering period and increase the number of flowers produced in the following season.

- Plants producing attractive fruit or seed sets should not be deadheaded, or pruned after flowering as this will prevent the formation of the fruit.
- Pruning method and timing is often specific depending on plant type and desired effect. A little research into your specific plants can guide you in the right direction.

6. Annuals and Perennials

- Planting any flowers should begin with the plant selection. Most annuals and perennials prefer a particular exposure. For example, Impatiens do not tolerate full sun and dry soil, while Petunias love full sun. Be sure to observe the area you will be planting, looking at the presence and duration of sun or shade. When selecting your annuals and perennials, also consider the potential size of each plant at its maturity.
- Drainage is also very important to a healthy flower garden, because water can be a flower's best friend or its worst enemy. Too little water and plants will quickly perish, too much and they will drown. If the area you are planting in tends to have sitting water there after a rain or watering for an extended period of time then you have poor drainage and will need to correct the problem. Sometimes simply raising the bed by adding soil can make the correction. Amending the soil may also alleviate the problem.
- As with ornamental shrubs many perennial and annual flowers benefit from removal of spent flowers unless attractive fruit or seed sets will follow blooming.
- Pruning perennials requires specific knowledge of the plant in question research into the plants should be done before pruning or a qualified professional should see to maintaining plants.
- Many perennials begin to decline after a few years. They don't grow as vigorously as they did the first few years after planting and they flower less. The center of the clump may appear dead, with little or no growth. When this happens, it's a good sign that the plant is ready to be divided. The best times and methods of dividing perennials varies with species. In most cases, you divide plants when they are dormant, either early in the season before they break dormancy or in fall so that the roots of the new plants can get settled in before the ground freezes.
- Annuals must be planted each year because they only last one growing season before their life cycle is complete. A few annuals that seed prolifically may be present year after year but should not be confused with perennials.
- Most annuals and perennials do not require heavy fertilization and can benefit from a fertilization schedule similar to that for woody ornamentals.

7. Pests of Ornamental Plant Material

- The most important steps in reducing plant damage in the home landscape are choosing plants suitable to the site and keeping them healthy by properly watering, fertilizing, and pruning them. If excessive pest damage still occurs it is important to choose a management method which has the least possible impact on other organisms and the environment.
- If you notice only a few pests causing insignificant damage nature may take care of the problem (i.e. a late season pest problem may be taken care of by the first frost). Also some pest can be controlled by physically removing the insects or keeping debris cleaned up since many times pests will over-winter in dead plant matter. Horticultural soaps and oils are less toxic options but must often be applied at the correct time in the pests life cycle to be effective.
- It is important to the environment and the local ecosystem to only use chemical pesticides as a last resort and only if there is an infestation that is seriously threatening the wellbeing of your landscape.
- If you think chemical pesticides are warranted be sure to follow manufacturer's warnings and instructions for application carefully or contact Realty Landscaping to discuss options for containing the problem.

- Deer can be devastating to trees and shrubs in the landscape. We have taken care to install plants which we feel are the most deer resistant. However in harsh winters all bets are off since hungry deer will eat any available plant material. Further deer damage can be caused by deer rub, which occurs in the fall. The trunks of young trees should be protected in autumn to prevent death caused by bark damage from deer rub. If you have questions about deer control for new or existing plantings please contact our office for advice.

8. Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

- Do not be tempted to spread broad-spectrum insecticides over your lawn on a calendar basis as insurance against all bugs. Big sale ads in spring and fall have more to do with store inventory and spring fever than with real pest problems. Broad spectrum insecticides will kill far more beneficial bugs in your lawn that are working overtime to keep pest species in check while you sleep! You will create more pests problems than you solve by this approach, contribute to contamination of surface water runoff and kill non-target organisms. Target only the pest you know you have, when you have them and when they are causing actual significant damage.
- Regular observation or monitoring of the plants in the landscape is critical in helping to decide if a problem requires corrective action. Many factors impact plant growth. Too often, gardeners assume that pests and diseases cause plant problems. For example, insect damage may occur after a plant has been weakened by other factors including site problems, cultural practices or environmental and nutritional problems.
- IPM is not a strictly organic approach to pest control. When necessary, chemicals are employed as a last resort. Broad-spectrum residual insecticides should not be relied upon as the primary management strategy. Residual pesticides remain effective in the environment for days, weeks or months, impacting beneficial organisms as well as pests.

9. Irrigation

- Your irrigation system was installed using the latest technology and best commercial quality parts. We have installed countless irrigation systems and have relatively few problems with them. Your new system should give you years of trouble-free operation. The most important detail of maintaining your irrigation system is proper yearly winterizing.
- Shutting down and starting and your sprinkler system for the season will depend on the weather conditions in your area and your individual watering needs. As a general rule, the system should not be opened in spring until the threat of frost is passed, likewise in the fall it should be winterized before any threat of freeze occurs.
- Realty Landscaping Corporation can arrange to maintain your irrigation system, please contact us for details.

10. Lighting

- Landscape lighting done properly compliments the aesthetic value of your property as much as any other enhancement method.
- The type of lighting fixture, quantity of lights, and proper placement, are key elements on achieving a subtler feel rather than an obtrusive glare that negates dimension and appeal.
- Your landscape lighting system has been professionally installed using high quality components. It will however require periodic maintenance to keep it working correctly and to maintain its aesthetic value. Please contact Realty if your system malfunctions or if you have maintenance concerns.

