

Timely Turf Tips

February 2010

Signs of Spring are starting to appear: Chickadees and cardinals are starting to sing their spring songs, oak leaves are falling and Steve is done drying corn. However, the most evident is: we have more daylight! Just over an hour has been added to our days since the winter solstice. And we're gaining 2.5 minutes of daylight everyday at the start of this month and 3 minutes a day by the end of February! Here are a few ideas to put those extra daylight hours to use.

Clean houseplants

- A warm shower of water or dusting of large leaves will help discourage pests and allow more useable sunlight to the plant.
- Check plants for salt build up. This is a crusty, white substance on the soil surface or white crusty stains on the inside of the pot. Scrap off the crusty salt buildup and then leach the soil by watering thoroughly. Wait 20 minutes and water thoroughly again. This helps dilute and wash the salts out of the soil.
- Do not fertilize this month.

Start planning for your vegetable and flower beds

- Make your final wish list and order your seeds as soon as possible, especially those you need to start indoors. Gather your planting materials while waiting for your seed order to arrive.
- Start seeds indoors February 1st for pansies; February 15th for fibrous begonias.
- Clean gardening tools. Use a wire brush to removed excess soil. Follow this with steel wool to remove any rust that formed on the metal surfaces. Sharpen the soil cutting edge of trowels and shovels with a triangular file. Rub in a couple of drops of oil to prevent further rusting. For more information, click on Terry's Tips: <http://minnesotagarden.com/?7f242028>

Trees

- Prune shade, ornamental, and fruit trees this month. For complete instructions on how to prune trees visit the U of M extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/DG0628.html>
- Bring fruit tree trimmings inside for forcing late winter blooms. Re-cut branch ends and fill vase with warm water.

Product Spotlight: Ice Melt This time of year, we have to deal with the problem of icy sidewalks. To keep sidewalks safe, most of us use an ice melting compound. All deicers basically work the same: it lowers the freezing temperature of water. If you ever watch salt melting ice, you can see the dissolving process happen -- the ice immediately around the grain of salt melts, and the melting spreads out from that point. Deicers must reach the pavement to become effective. Once on the pavement this "brine" can spread out on the ice and break its bond with the pavement. As the ice is loosened it can be more easily shoveled away.

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