

Timely Turf Tips

April 2012

I know! Right?! Earliest spring EVER! The forsythia, crocus, hyacinths, daffodils, rhododendrons are in bloom. A good month ahead of their average bloom time! And we want to do it all...now. Not so fast. **Stay off the grass!** It's still too early to apply crabgrass preventer, fertilizer, broadleaf control; it's too early to spread grub control for Japanese Beetles and it's too early to power rake/dethatch your lawn. There's a good chance April temperatures will drop back to normal. It's not too early to lightly rake your lawn and when needed give it the first mowing. Spring is always a busy time of year and there's much to do. However, we are giving you permission NOT to start your lawn care chores this month. We will send out an email when it IS time to apply crabgrass preventer.

Planting the Vegetable Garden

Determine how much space you need. It's best to start small like a 10 x10 or even containers if you don't have a yard. Veggies by the Yard, an arboretum program, has vegetable garden plans for: First Time Gardeners, a Two in One garden (early spring and mid summer planting in the same space), Dig it (all root vegetables), Salad lovers special and Adventurous Cooks garden to challenge both the gardeners that grow them and the cooks that use them. <http://tinyurl.com/6t2y3fz>

Pick a perfect spot. Vegetables love sun, 6-8 hours of it. Close enough to water. And good soil. It's best to test the soil before you begin digging. Take a soil sample and bring it in to the Mill and we will send it to the U of M. How to take a soil sample:

<http://soiltest.cfans.umn.edu>

Raised beds are a great way to improve drainage and fill with great soil. For more information on raised beds:

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/M1254.html>

Prepare the soil. Add soil amendments recommended by your soil test results. Steve is an expert at reading the U of M soil results page and will pull together the amendment specifically for your site. We are talking designer amendments! Till or spade the area, then rake smooth.

Cool Season Crops can be planted now. You can sow early "cool-season" crops such as lettuce, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and onions immediately after preparing your garden plot. Read the seed packet for additional planting directions.

April Showers

We just haven't had the moisture needed for last year's newly planted trees and shrubs. Fall was the driest on record followed by an almost snowless winter. The best thing to do for your trees and shrubs is to water them now and keep watering until Mother Nature provides some much needed rain.

If you haven't uncovered your gardens, put that on your to do list. Many perennials have emerged and will suffer if they continue to be buried under the winter mulch.

Sign of Spring: Baltimore Orioles return this month. Start putting your oranges and grape jelly out to attract them to your yard. Listen here: <http://www.birdjam.com/birdsong.php?id=2>

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