



In the garden with Ed...

Spring '09 Edition -

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What's New?

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Getting ready for spring!

OK - so now that you've all received your wealth redistribution / stimulus checks (my wife says we didn't get one - but I don't believe her) - you're probably sitting back comfortably watching your investments grow - and wondering what to do next! Well - if you're like me - since I haven't seen this money - and my 201k is looking kinda sickly - the only thing I'm going to help grow are the things in my garden. At least I have some control over growth here. So - in this issue - let's talk about what you can do over the next month or two to get the most out of your landscape investment this spring and summer. I like to call this ROL - "Return on Landscaping" - (bear with me - my folks paid for a degree in Economics - so I'm trying to get some use out of it).

Crape Myrtles / Ornamental Grasses

If you read our Winter '08 newsletter we talked about pruning your Crape Myrtles and Ornamental Grasses for the winter. Well - if you haven't already done this - DO IT NOW! Time's a wastin' - you don't want any new growth to start and then cut it off of your Crape Myrtles - and your Ornamental Grasses probably look terrible by now and have started spreading 4' long grass fronds all over the neighborhood. If you've been getting nasty looks from that mean old lady down the street this could be part of the reason why. If you have a large dog and do not carry Publix bags with you - this could be the other reason! But that's another story for

another time.

In any event - for those of you who've done this I won't bore you with the proper pruning techniques. For those of you who haven't - get out those Binford 2000 pruners this weekend and go for it. The weather is supposed to be nice. If you don't remember or can't find our last newsletter let me know and I'll resend it to you. Bottom line - Ornamental Grasses should look like a neat 10" Crew Cut - and Crape Myrtles should look like this...

Pre-emergent application

If you do not enjoy Crabgrass or summer weeds in your Bermuda lawn remember March 1st. Put it on your calendar - put it into your PDA - put a sticky note on your mirror. That is the date you should put down your spring pre-emergent. You have to do this when our soil temps are about 50 degrees - so that you get it down before the crabgrass seeds start to germinate - but not so early that the pre-emergent just washes away and loses all its potency. Timing is everything with pre-emergents - so really try to do this right around the 1st of March to optimize the effectiveness.

Some of the more effective herbicides you can use are:

- Betasan
- Halts
- Amaze, Balan, Crabgrass Preventer
- Crab-Ex
- Surflan
- Barricade



One note - read the label directions - more is not always better - and please keep Sparky - and the kids off the lawn until this washes into the soil.



When to plant your annuals

OK - so here's what happens - every year! We get a nice warm spell - for two weeks - in late March. You drive by Pikes or the Lowes or your local nursery - and they have tons - I mean tons - of beautiful, colorful, lush annuals - just screaming out for you to take them home and plant them in your garden. This would be a good time to remember the old "Adam & Eve & the Devil & the Apple" lesson.

AVOID THIS TEMPTATION!!!

Drive away quickly - go home - and think Easter of '06 - and the big freeze! In Atlanta - you should NOT plant annuals before April 15th - no matter what Kirk Mellish says! April 15th is not only tax day (sorry) - but also the typical last day we get a hard freeze here. The only reason those annuals look so good at those places is that they are greenhouse grown - and the nurseries will pull them in, cover them up, and spray them with a nice shower of water all night if a freeze happens. You - more than likely - do not have this capability across your entire landscape. So don't waste your money - and your planting skills until mid April!

So - what can you do between now and then?

Well - you could contact Tom Daschle or Treasury Secretary Geithner for some last minute tax tips - or - if you don't think you'll get a presidential appointment soon - just clean up your annual beds.

Pull up the old clippings - the weeds - the leaves - the neighbor's recycle bin stuff that blew out and got buried under your azaleas - and prepare your planting beds. Spade up the existing soil about 6 to 8 inches. Add a two cubic foot bag of soil conditioner for every



OK - OK - this may be pushing it - but I'm trying to make a point here!

It could happen.

ten square feet of bed. Then add two bags of All-Purpose Sand, and about a pint of garden lime and a half-bag of chicken compost and just mix 'em all up, till it in, and level out the bed. Then, the day after the IRS makes you cry you can go ahead and plant your annuals!

Lastly - put a nice layer of fine dark mulch over the entire bed. It will make the bed look finished and do a LOT to help conserve moisture around your annuals during those hot summer months.

Pruning summer blooming shrubs

Evergreen shrubs and flowering shrubs that bloom during the summer months can be pruned now. These include:

- Abelia
- Arborvitae
- Beautyberry
- Boxwood
- Chastetree (Vitex)
- Clethra (Summersweet)
- Deciduous and Evergreen Cotoneaster
- Crape Myrtle
- Redtwig Dogwood
- Thorny Eleagnus
- Deciduous and Evergreen Euonymus
- Gardenia
- Hibiscus (Rose of Sharon)
- Deciduous Holly (Winterberry)
- Summer blooming Hydrangea
- St. Johnswort (Hypericum)
- Juniper
- Nandina
- Osmanthus

- Photinia (Red Tip)
- Mugo Pine
- Deciduous and Evergreen Privet
- Potentilla
- Rose
- Spirea (summer blooming)
- Smoke Tree
- Yew

We'll talk about pruning spring blooming shrubs in another letter, because you won't prune them until April or May after they bloom.

Spring Fertilization

How do you decide what and when to feed your plants? Well - just like us humans - plants will need the most nutrition when they are most active and growing. With the warmth of spring comes a lot of activity in the plant world - so - in general - now is a good time to fertilize your plants.

What's on the menu? Just remember this simple adage: UP - DOWN - ALL AROUND.

The first number on a fertilizer bag helps the growth of leaves (UP), the second number helps the roots grow (DOWN) and the third number keeps plants healthy (ALL AROUND).

I use a lot of 10-10-10 and 5-10-15 in my garden. And Brand Names mean nothing - anything marked 10-10-10 has the same ingredients - so why pay extra - it's like generic drugs for us humans?

I also like to use slow-release fertilizer pellets like Osmocote, Sta-Green, DynaMite, etc. when I plant my annuals and water-soluble

fertilizer powders like Peters or Miracle Grow when I need to give a little booster shot to individual plants.

The end...

We're done for this newsletter! Since you're a client, you know that if you have any specific questions on your plants just call me. I'm always here to help.

Let us know if this was helpful - or if you'd like to be removed from our mailing list. And once again - Thanks for being a client - and for all of the great referrals - we really appreciate you. What I say means nothing but what you say about us means everything!



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