

April 8, 2010

## **Jump Start the Spring Growing Season**

If you invest a bit of time now, you can ensure a bountiful harvest and a beautiful landscape to make this your best gardening season yet. Preparing a strong spring foundation means new plantings are better able to survive the heat, drought and pest attacks of summer.

"Start your garden off right by adding several inches of organic matter to the top 6- to 12-inches of soil," recommends horticulture expert and author Melinda Myers. "Peat moss, compost, aged manure and other organic materials improve drainage in heavy clay soil and increase the water holding capacity of sandy soils."

Incorporate a slow-release, low-nitrogen fertilizer like [Milorganite](#) before planting flowers and vegetables. "I like [Milorganite's](#) low nitrogen formulation" says Myers. "This makes it goof proof so you will not harm young tender plants no matter what your gardening skill. Its slow-release nitrogen encourages overall growth without preventing flowering and fruit production that can occur when too much nitrogen is applied."

Reduce weed problems and increase the health and vigor of your lawn by properly mowing, watering and fertilizing. "Mow high to encourage deep roots that are more pest- and drought-resistant," Myers suggests. "Taller grass is better able to fend off weeds." Mow often and leave the short clippings on the lawn to add nutrients, organic matter and moisture to the soil. Use a sharp blade for quicker recovery and a better-looking lawn.

Water thoroughly but less frequently to encourage deep roots. Water your lawn early in the morning to minimize water loss. If you allow your lawn to go dormant during drought, leave it dormant until temperatures cool, rains return and nature brings it back to life.

Use a low-nitrogen, slow-release fertilizer for your spring feeding. An organic nitrogen type fertilizer will not promote lush growth that is more susceptible to disease and requires more mowing. Plus if you stop watering or your community institutes a watering ban, it won't damage the lawn. In fact, the fertilizer will stay in the soil until the weather improves and your lawn starts to grow.

Improve the health of trees and shrubs with proper watering and mulch. Water new plantings whenever the top few inches of soil are dry. Don't forget about established plants. These need a helping hand during extended periods of drought. Always water thoroughly to encourage deep drought-resistant roots.

Maintain a 2- to 3-inch layer of mulch around trees and shrubs. Woodchips, shredded bark and other organic materials help conserve moisture, suppress weeds and improve the soil as they decompose. Keep mulch away from the trunk of trees and crowns of other plants to reduce the risk of disease.

Use an all-purpose fertilizer to give existing trees, shrubs and perennials a nutrient boost. A low-nitrogen, slow-release formula encourages moderate growth that needs less pruning and is less susceptible to certain pests.

And don't forget to take a moment to enjoy the beauty of spring while preparing your landscape for the season ahead. If you need help with any of these items, feel free to [contact us](#). We would be happy to prepare an estimate for all of your spring maintenance needs!