

## **Spring Lawn and Garden Care Fact Sheet**

### **Tools**

- Clean and sharpen all tools including pruners, saws and especially the lawnmower blades. This reduces insect and disease problems. Sterilize pruners/saws with Isopropyl alcohol. Always sterilize between cuts.

### **Compost**

- Cap the composters with 7-15 cm (3-6 inches) of garden soil as soon as the soil thaws.
- Insure that it remains moist at all times.
- Empty the composters in June after the food scraps have finished decomposing.
- Mulch the beds or topdress the lawn with compost after the soil has warmed up.
- Place the composters in accessible places, with exposed soil so that a shovel full can be sprinkled over the kitchen scraps each time they are added to the composter.

### **Soil**

- Do not walk in the garden until the soil has thawed and excess water has drained away. Damp cold soil compacts above the frozen soil.
- The best method of maintaining great plant health is to feed the soil organisms (microbes-earthworms) by amending, topdressing or mulching with compost or organic matter. This will supply the plants with the nutrients they need.
- Soil rich in organic matter or compost requires less watering and the plants withstand hot dry periods better.
- Water in the early morning.
- Water slowly so that no water runs off the soil, runoff erodes the topsoil.

### **Lawns**

- Do not walk on the lawn until the soil has thawed and excess water has drained away.
- Gently rake the lawn to remove the debris and crusted snow mould from the lawn surface.
- In late May topdress the lawn with compost, screened topdressing soil, or other organic materials, (try a mixture of coffee grounds, compost and wood ash. Use wood ash carefully because it is caustic and raises soil pH. Topdressing reduces the thatch layer by accelerating its decomposition and reduces the populations of surface feeding insects. It is less damaging than using a dethatching blade.
- Consider weaning the lawn off chemical/synthetic fertilizers by reducing the application rates by  $\frac{1}{2}$  in year one and by  $\frac{1}{4}$  in year two, while applying an organic fertilizer (or topdressing) every summer.
- If chemical/synthetic lawn fertilizers are being used, apply at the recommended or lower rate, excess Nitrogen (the first number) makes the plant and leaves grow quickly making them vulnerable to insect and disease damage.
- Water the lawn deeply in the morning, 2.5 cm/week (1"), if it has not rained.
- Consider installing an irrigation system with a timer.
- Mow weekly to 7 cm (3") in height. Leave the clippings on the lawn where they will decompose returning the nutrients back to the soil and feeding the earthworms.
- Repair damage that occurred during winter
  - Reseed bare patches.
  - Lime areas where road salt has caused the soil structure to become less porous.

- If there is moss in the lawn, increase the light by pruning tree branches, lime and loosen the soil to raise the pH and drainage.
- If there is extensive damage check for insects such as grubs, and identify the species before treating.

### **Perennial Border**

- Take off any materials used to protect the perennials during winter. Straw and leaves should be composted then used to mulch or amend the soil.
- Gently rake debris from the soil surface with a fan rake.
- Remove the soil mounded around the roses and other tender shrubs (used to protect them)
- Divide perennials
- Increase air circulation around perennials prone to mildews.
- Reduce the places insects hide in by removing dead leaves and debris.
- Monitor for emerging insect predators especially on Asiatic and Oriental Lilies.
- Set up barriers for slugs

### **Vegetable Garden**

- The planting design and beds should have been constructed in the fall.
- Begin planting the cool crops in April (depending on temperature). Some cool crops are; beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, carrots, chard, lettuce, and peas.
- Plant the other crops in late May to early June, after the risk of frost is past and the soil has warmed up to be pleasant to touch.
- Mulch the soil after the crops have germinated and the soil has warmed up. Mulching reduced weeds, moisture loss and moderates soil temperature fluctuations.
- Different crops can be planted after early crops (i.e. radishes and lettuce) have been harvested.

### **Evergreen Hedges**

- In March remove protective coverings because they can trap heat during sunny days.
- Trim the cedar hedge in late May if it has symptoms of Cedar Leaf Minor otherwise plan on clipping once or twice between late May and mid August.
- Water 1"/week (unless it rains)

### **Shrubs**

- Prune branches that were damaged during winter.
- Prune fall blooming shrubs if they need it.
- Spring and summer blooming shrubs should be pruned after they bloom if they need it.

### **Trees**

- Buy Dormant oil, lime sulfur (they come in one box) to apply to trees and shrubs in late February or March as a means of controlling insect and disease problems.
- Remove any protective wrap from trunks otherwise they become safe havens for insects and diseases.
- Remove the egg cases of pest insects such as Tent caterpillars from branches.
- Prune branches that were damaged during winter.
- Prune out any diseased branches, then sterilize the tools.

### **Biodiversity**

- Increase the number of plant species adding ones that predator animals and insects like.
- Add bird/bat houses
- Add birdbaths or ponds