



The Daily Gleaner

May 10, 2008

Eco-friendly landscaping

Luscious greens and chirping birds are signs that spring is truly here. And if you have finished spring-cleaning indoors, you may be considering tackling your outside space - landscaping and lawn work. Although keeping your lawn healthy can be a challenge the end result is rewarding, and there are many opportunities along the way to make ecologically sound choices when managing your yard.

Do keep in mind water conservation when designing and maintaining your lawn. A xeriscaped lawn can reduce landscape water consumption by 50–75 percent. Xeriscaping refers to landscaping in ways that do not require supplemental irrigation. It is often promoted in areas that do not have easily accessible supplies of fresh water, but is catching on in other areas as climate patterns shift. Xeriscaping involves planting the proper natural species to reduce insects and pests, which is a great preventative measure to using pesticides down the road. So aside from occasional pruning and weeding, maintenance is minimal. The best part of a xeriscaped lawn is that it typically does not need to be mowed! Let the plants and shrubs grow, and if there is any lawn left around them, it can be mowed with a non-gas, non-electric push mower.

Using rain barrels is another way to reduce water consumption for lawn maintenance by using rainwater to water plants, gardens and flowers on your property. Plants love rainwater because it doesn't contain chlorine and is warmer than tap water. You can water your indoor plants with rainwater too!

Are you putting in new plants this year? Try placing organic mulch around the root zone after planting. A two- to four-inch layer of organic mulch will keep roots cooler and will help retain moisture. Keep mulches about three or four inches from the trunk or stem, as too much moisture against the bark can cause damage.

Although weeds in the yard are not the end of the world, aesthetically speaking, they do compete with other plants for water and nutrients. If you have weeds, try removing them with a weeding tool or by hand after a rainfall to get a better chance at getting at the whole weed, roots and all. Or you can spot-check individual weeds with vinegar to avoid using herbicides.

And remember compost provides excellent nutrition for your lawn, and the best part is that you can make it yourself! There are many benefits of using compost for your landscaping needs, including: maintaining a healthy soil pH so that plants grow better and lawns stay greener; improving the texture of the soil; and attracting earthworms, which are a natural way of aerating the soil.

Don't forget, you always have an alternative to putting chemicals on your lawn. Plan ahead and take preventative precautions by planting native species, and by applying compost to your lawn each year to raise the nitrogen content in your soil – which helps the grass flourish and keeps weeds to a minimum.

Remember, once your lawn gets a taste of chemicals, it relies on them and won't flourish without them, so the reapplication of chemicals is endless. Seek out organic lawn care; the higher the demand for non-chemical lawn care treatment, the more willing retailers and service providers will be to supply this ecological alternative.

For more water saving tips for your yard and garden check out the Green Matters Water Conservation Campaign - *Every Drop Counts*, at www.greenmattersfredericton.ca/en/EveryDropCounts.asp. Remember, we can have great lawns without using too much water!

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