

Five Tips for Spring Landscape Cleanup

As winter draws to a close, your landscape is beginning to wake up. Even though your plants still look dormant, March* is a wonderful time to pull on your gardening gloves and start tackling several yard care tasks. If you do these five things in the next month, your efforts will pay off all summer.

1. **Cut back ornamental grasses and perennial flowers.** Cut all the dead, crispy, brown material from last year to ground level. These stems and leaves will never green up again, so remove them to let new growth take center stage. Learn more specific steps in our spring landscape cleanup video.

2. **Prune shrubs.** March is the perfect time of year to prune crowded, damaged, or less-than-ideal branches out of your bushes. Use good pruning techniques and avoid shearing shrubs.

3. **Refresh your wood mulch areas.** Once your landscape plants are cut back, it's much easier to add new mulch to plant beds. Add enough new wood mulch, chips, or bark so the whole layer is 3-4 inches thick. This will keep the weeds down and preserve soil moisture throughout the growing season. Brush mulch off cut back plants and don't pile it against their crowns.

4. **Apply weed preventer in gravel areas.** If you have areas covered with rock or gravel and have had a weed problem in the past, consider putting down weed preventer. By stopping new weeds from germinating, this practice can save you a lot of time and effort later in the summer. Apply this only in areas you will not be seeding (like a vegetable garden or bare spots in your lawn) and water in to activate. Keep in mind it will only stop new weeds from germinating, not control existing weeds that regrow each spring from their roots.

5. **Water by hose, if needed.** Your plants' roots become active once the soil temperature rises over 40 degrees. This means your plants will typically start using soil moisture before you turn on your sprinkler system. If we have an extended dry period, water your lawn, flowers and trees with a hose-end sprinkler periodically to ensure the soil is moist enough to support healthy growth. Be sure to disconnect the hose once you're finished to avoid freeze damage.

*** NOTE:** While these tips are directed at yard maintenance tasks in March (largely timed to occur once our local weather allows) they can be performed - and very beneficial - in April or even early May depending on local conditions.