

Get your yard ready for summer

By Gary Coroneos

No matter how much yard work you have done in the fall, there is always something that needs to be done in the spring to get your landscape ready for another Wisconsin summer.

The first thing you should do is take a walk around your property and see what effects Mother Nature and Jack Frost had on your landscape the past few months. If you or your neighbor has a dog, you may have to clean up their winter “activity.” The best way to treat brown areas due to your pet is to use a lot of water and wash the salt and urine into the soil. In a majority of the cases, the grass will come back. If the damage is excessive seeding the area may be necessary.

With the amount of snow we have had this winter, you may notice the turf matted down in patches. The patches are likely caused by a disease called snow mold. This disease glues the grass blades together, which can stop the grass from growing through the mat. A light raking will break up the matted grass and remedy the situation.

Also, if the grass was left too long last fall, you may notice trails through the lawn. Sometimes trails connect planting beds or they appear in areas where large amounts of snow accumulated for a long time. These areas are where meadow voles travelled under the snow, eating grass or taking some back to their nests. The good news is that even though the tunnels look bad, the voles rarely feed down into the crown of the grass plant and the areas will come back. Again, a light raking to remove the dead grass and some patience will be all that’s needed.

However, before you start doing any raking of your lawn, make sure it is not too wet. Raking a wet lawn can uproot many of your grass plants and cause the lawn to look a lot thinner all spring, as new grass plants need to grow into those areas that were raked out. Always let the soil dry out before raking.

Most trees and shrubs benefit from annual pruning. It keeps them in shape, gets rid of dead and diseased wood, and encourages new growth. But not all trees and shrubs should be pruned in early spring – especially some of the flowering ones. Pruning them early in the spring would mean losing some blossoms. But sometimes it is easier to prune when you can see the shape of the plant before the branches are covered with leaves. Trees and shrubs that are in need of a good shaping could sacrifice a few blooms to be invigorated by a spring pruning. If you are concerned about which trees and shrubs can endure an early spring pruning, you can always call the DNR or your local arborist.

Spring is a time of rebirth and reawakening from a long winter nap. It is also a time to setup your yard for a successful summer. Getting out into the fresh, spring air can do much to revitalize you as well as your plants. Spend a couple hours doing some proactive care of your landscape and you will be rewarded with healthier and more vigorously growing lawn and plants. It will do wonders for you as well!

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