

REDUCING PESTICIDES

it's perfectly natural.



A Calendar of Natural Lawn and Garden Care

A calendar of natural lawn care

Part of caring for your natural lawn and garden is accepting that each year will bring its own particular weather, insects and other unique seasonal conditions. Because of these seasonal variations, your lawn may look somewhat different from one year to the next. This is perfectly natural. If the differences are due to weather or other temporary cycles, patience is the best response. It is not uncommon for one season's challenges to go away as the weather changes. Bothersome insects one season become the food source for beneficial insects the next. In other cases, such as when

unwanted weeds are moving in or your grass is dying, you may need to adjust your natural program with the addition an aeration, some extra topdressing or a little hand weeding.

Regardless of the season's characteristics, however, there are some important practices that should be followed every year. These simple practices in combination with proper mowing and watering techniques will let you create a lawn that is healthy and vibrant. With just a little help from you, your lawn will be able to cope, season after season, with whatever Mother Nature has to offer.

EARLY SPRING	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	LATE FALL
Late April to Early May	May and June	July and August	Late August to Late September	Late September to November
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Repair areas of winterkill, but avoid working on a wet lawn ➤ Rake the lawn to remove debris and any brown patches ➤ Apply organic soil amendments: topdress and overseed ➤ Monitor for weeds and spot hand weed ➤ For larger areas of annual weeds, consider soil solarization in July or August ➤ Sharpen lawn mower blade ➤ Raise mower height to 7.5 cm (3") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fertilize after first burst of grass growth ➤ Aerate lawns new to a natural approach, add topdressing or fertilizer ➤ Identify weeds and hand weed as necessary ➤ Cut lawn before weeds go to seed ➤ Monitor for grub activity in dead patches where grass easily pulls up ➤ If you have grub damage, repair areas and ensure proper cultural practices are followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dormant lawns may naturally turn brown during heat of the summer ➤ Avoid cutting the lawn during drought ➤ Keep foot traffic off the lawn if it is dormant ➤ Apply liquid kelp to help manage summer stress ➤ Water the grass every 2 to 3 weeks during an extended drought ➤ If you have a lot of weed cover, now is to the time to start solarization ➤ Check for signs of chinch bug damage. If you have damage, repair and ensure proper cultural practices are followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overseed the entire lawn ➤ Repair damaged areas with a seed blend high in endophytic grass seed ➤ Monitor for insect damage when lawn greens up with fall rains ➤ Aerate in combination with seeding or topdressing ➤ Apply nematodes if grub damage has not been managed with cultural practices ➤ Seed and water solarized areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Apply final late fall fertilization to prepare grass for the following spring ➤ Clean and winterize lawn equipment ➤ Leave mulched leaves on lawn with mulched clippings from final cut

A calendar of natural garden care

It is very important that you have an understanding of the plants in your garden and their specific care requirements. Each plant requires unique horticultural practices including pruning and watering. Understanding the specific

requirements of garden plants will go a long way toward successful gardening. There are some general practices that will benefit all plants and should be part of a natural garden care plan.

SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cut back dead plant material on perennials ➤ Prune roses to improve air circulation and remove winter kill ➤ Add a fresh 5 cm (1 to 2 inch) layer of compost on all garden beds ➤ Remove any large, wet clumps of leaves and add to composter ➤ Plant new material by the end of May ➤ Apply mulch to new plantings ➤ Trim evergreens after spring growth to maintain shape or size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deadhead (remove the dead flowers from) any plants which are enthusiastic spreaders ➤ Prune any plants which are growing fast to encourage good air circulation ➤ Monitor garden for weeds, remove from beds and replenish mulch ➤ Monitor for garden pests and check gardening reference resources to help identify problem insects and beneficial insects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Divide any perennials which have outgrown their space ➤ Mulch beds ➤ Cut back roses to 1/2 their height ➤ Remove any plants that were poor performers and note in journal for future planning ➤ Leave the leaves in the garden for winter mulch or by the composter so fresh compost will be ready for spring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prune shrubs and small trees when branching structure is easy to see ➤ Make notes about spring planting plans

A calendar of natural tree care

The calendar for tree care, as for plants and shrubs, is highly dependent upon the tree species and unique seasonal conditions. In some cases, it will be necessary to call in a certified arborist

for an exact diagnosis of the situation and to make care recommendations. However, you are in the best position to monitor and observe tree performance throughout the season and to ensure proper horticultural practices are being followed.

SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Monitor for pests - this tends to be the most active time for insect damage ➤ Remove any tent caterpillar nests ➤ Check with arborist if large trees require pruning to remove dead or damaged branches or to allow more sunlight on your lawn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that trees, especially young ones, are properly watered during drought ➤ Protect tree trunk and roots from summer construction activity and lawn equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inspect for insects such as fall web worm ➤ Let fallen leaves collect around base of tree to protect tree roots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Avoid piling snow containing salt shoveled from driveways on root zone of trees ➤ New tree plantings over 3 metres tall can be staked. Remove stakes when roots become established in about one year

This calendar is excerpted from *Pesticide Free: A Guide to Natural Lawn and Garden Care* available at www.toronto.ca/pesticides