



Maintaining Your Landscape

Congratulations on your new landscape installation! To ensure your continued enjoyment of your investment, it is imperative that your plants are properly maintained. The following is a general maintenance guide. This refers to “most” landscape plantings. We cannot specifically cover every plant available therefore if you have any specific questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office at 610-796-7818.

WATERING:

Grass

The key to establishing a newly installed lawn, whether it is seeded or sodded, is proper watering. You should water once a day for 4 weeks in the early morning or late afternoon. For the remaining season, water every 3rd-4th day. To measure watering, place an empty can about six feet away from the sprinkler. When there is an inch of water in the can, it is time to move the sprinkler to the next area. Mowing can begin when the grass reaches 3 to 3 ½ inches. Set your mower to a cutting height of 3+ inches. A good rule to follow is never remove more than 1/3 of the grass height. Keep leaves, people, pets and toys off the lawn for the first 2-3 weeks. Grass should be fertilized at least twice a year, once in spring and again in the fall. Do not use crabgrass pre-emergent or weed control products until new grass has been mowed three times.

Trees/Shrub/Perennials

Proper watering is by far the most important ingredient to establishing plant material. A good schedule to follow is to water your plants twice a week (during hot summer days you may have to water more frequently). Trees should receive 5-10 gallons of water, 2-3 times per week. Shrubs get 3 gallons of water 2-3 times per week. The best options for large planting areas are to set a sprinkler on the entire area, or use a soaker hose. To measure watering, place an empty can about six feet away from the sprinkler. When there is an inch of water in the can, it is time to move the sprinkler to the next area. Perennials will frequently dry out faster and should be watered as needed (possibly daily). It is better to water deeply and less frequently, than to lightly water every day. It is also possible to over-water, so before watering again, stick your finger a couple of inches into the soil, (making sure you go through the mulch), if the soil is wet – do not water. Check daily and water again when necessary. Once the plants are established, once-a-week watering should be sufficient. In year 2, monitor your plants during the heat of the summer, they will need to be watered during hot or dry periods.

NOTE: Just because it rains do not assume you do not have to water. We have to receive at least one inch of rainfall to skip watering.

PRUNING:

Pruning will keep plants at a desired size, promote growth for flowers and fruit, and allow air and light into a plant. There are two basic ways of pruning – shearing with hedge trimmers or pruning with hand pruners. Although shearing is the most common way of pruning, it is not always best. Shearing creates dense branching, that form a green band around the plant that most of us are familiar with. This makes it difficult for light and air to reach the interior of the plant resulting in a bare interior. A better way to prune is to use hand pruners, reaching in 6-8 inches to cut deep inside the plant. By pruning this way, it will allow light and air circulation, allowing the plant to be greener deeper into the interior. In addition, you will give the plant a more natural appearance, at a more manageable size longer because you will be removing more of the branch than by shearing, which only removes 3 to 4 inches. Hand pruning takes longer; however, this method of pruning will extend the life and health of your landscape investment.

Spring Flowering Shrubs (Azalea, Forsythia, Pieris, Itea, Lilac, Rhododendron, Sandcherry, Scotch Broom, Viburnum, Weigela, Witchhazel) These plants bloom on the previous season's growth and are best pruned directly after they bloom, no later than July 4th. If pruned later, you may destroy flower buds which are forming for the following year.

Summer Flowering and Non-Flowering Deciduous Shrubs (Barberry, Burning Bush, Hydrangea, Red Twig Dogwood, Rose, Rose of Sharon, Spirea) These plants bloom on this year's new growth and should be cut back hard in early spring, before new growth begins. This will encourage dense, compact growth. If pruning in summer, prune directly after flowering. Butterfly Bush and Blue Mist Spirea are shrubs that bloom on new wood. They both benefit by being cut back very hard to a height of 12 to 18 inches and this should be done every spring to control their size and promote blooming.

Evergreen Shrubs and Trees (Arborvitae, Spruce, Boxwood, Gold Thread Cypress, Hemlock, Hinoki, Holly, Inkberry, Juniper, Yews) These shrubs or trees can be pruned in late spring/early summer when light green new growth appears again and/or in summer up into the fall. Avoid heavy pruning in the fall as this may encourage new growth that may not harden off by winter resulting in winter burning.

All Pines (White, Dwarf White, Swiss Stone, Mugo) These are best pruned in late spring/early summer when new growth elongates, called "candles". Pruning must not be done after early July. If pruned later, you will destroy buds forming for the next year's growth. This will cause unsightly "stubs" to form at the ends of the branches.

Shade and Ornamental Trees Pruning should not be done on trees for at least two years after planting. The tree needs every possible leaf to produce energy to replace the roots that were lost in transplanting. Prune trees of dead, diseased, injured, crossing or rubbing branches or to improve the form, shape, or size of the tree. Prune spring flowering trees directly after flowering (Crabapple, Pear, Cherry, Redbud, Magnolia, Serviceberry etc.) Most shade trees (Oak, Locust, Linden, etc.) are best pruned during the dormant winter season before new growth starts in spring. Some plants bleed heavily after pruning (Maples, Birches, Beeches and Dogwood). Trees subject to bleeding should be pruned in later spring or early summer when leaves are on the tree.

FERTILIZING:

Your plants should be fertilized regularly. An annual application of a general slow release fertilizer in the spring is sufficient for most plants. Acid-loving plants such as Azalea, Boxwood, Dogwood, Holly, Inkberry, Rhododendron and other evergreen shrubs and trees will prefer Holly-tone. If you have our Plant Health Care (PHC) program, we will fertilize all of your plants during the yearly visits.

MULCHING:

To help aid your plants, be sure to maintain a minimum layer of 3 inches of mulch. Mulching will help the ground retain moisture, keep weeds suppressed, and maintain a neat and fresh appearance. Be sure not to mound mulch around the crown of the plant. Do not build mounds around trees, mulch should only begin at the root flare.

PERENNIALS:

What are they and which ones? Perennials are flowers and grasses that die down to the ground in the winter, reappearing again in the spring. Caring for your perennials can be as individual as the flowers themselves. However, here are some basic tips to follow:

- **Deadheading:** As spring turns to summer, it becomes time to “deadhead” meaning to remove faded flowers. Sometimes that involves removing only the flower (Coneflower, Blanket Flower and Meadow Sage) and other times it requires removing the entire stalk (Daylily, Hosta, Coralbell). The removal of spent flowers prevents seeds from forming and encourages repeat blooming. Cutting flowers for arranging also qualifies as deadheading, so do not be afraid to cut and enjoy beautiful bouquets of flowers. Another good rule to follow – if it looks bad, cut it off. Meadow Sage, Bee Balm, Coneflower, Gay Feather, Geranium, and Coreopsis can be cut back after blooming and will reward you with another burst of blooms.
- **Fall cut back:** After the frost kills the foliage you can cut the plants back 2-3 inches. Do not cut back Lavender or Russian Sage. These plants are shrub-like and should be cut back in the spring to the point where the new buds have formed. Cut ornamental grasses back in the spring. They add winter interest to your landscape with their dried leaves and seed heads rustling in the wind.
- **Dividing:** Over time your perennials can be divided (after 3-5 years). Dividing your plants help keep them confined to a smaller area and it promotes new growth, meaning better foliage and blooms. Early spring is the best time to divide, as soon as, new growth appears. Using a shovel or pitch fork, dig up the entire root mass of the plant and pull or cut apart the mass into sections.

Perennials are fairly resistant to pests and diseases; however, powdery mildew can occur under certain conditions. This is a fungus that looks like a gray powder that forms on the leaves. Fortunately, only some perennials are susceptible. This problem usually occurs when we have long periods of humidity and moisture. To control this problem it is easiest to cut the perennial to the ground and discard the foliage.

INSECTS AND DISEASES:

Plants are susceptible to insect or disease problems especially if they are stressed. It is impossible to cover all of the signs and symptoms of every pest on every plant. If in the future you think or know you may have a pest problem, call us at New Castle or consult your County Cooperative Extension Agent for sound advice. Before you apply any treatment, it is best to first correctly diagnose the problem. By applying the wrong treatment, either you will be wasting your time and money, or you can make the problem much worse than it already is. By properly caring for your plants, you will keep them healthy and vigorous, making them less susceptible to future pest problems. New Castle offers a Plant Health Care program, please inquire for more information.

One thing to keep in mind is with any garden; do not try to do everything in one weekend. There is not any one time of the year that is best to do all the maintenance. Your garden is meant to be something to enjoy. New Castle offers a variety of maintenance services from mulching and cleanup to pruning and fertilizing. Contact us and we can tailor a program that is specific to your property and lifestyle. Nurturing your landscape or garden will reward you with all the pleasures of watching things grow more beautiful with each passing season.

We hope you enjoy your new landscaping!

Best Regards,
Bryan, Brian & Brad and your New Castle Team