



Spring gardening season is right around the corner, so now is an ideal time to prepare gardens for the warmer seasons ahead.

HOME & GARDEN

Post-Winter Garden Prep

Lawns and gardens can bear the brunt of winter weather and are often in need of tender loving care by the time spring arrives.

Preparing a garden for spring and summer involves assessing any damage that harsh weather might have caused. As temperatures climb, gardeners can heed the following post-winter garden preparation tips in an effort to ensure some successful gardening in the months ahead.

- Assess the damage. Even if winter was mild, gardens might still have suffered some damage. Inspect garden beds and any fencing or

barriers designed to keep wildlife from getting into the garden. Before planting anew, fix any damage that Mother Nature or local wildlife might have caused over the past several months.

- Clear debris. Garden beds and surrounding landscapes that survived winter without being damaged might still be littered with debris. Remove fallen leaves, branches and even litter that blew about on windy winter days before planting season. Make sure to discard any debris effectively so it does not find its way back into the garden.

- Turn the greenhouse

into a clean house. Spring cleaning is not just for the interior of a home. Cleaning a greenhouse in advance of spring can help gardeners evict any overwintering pests that can threaten plant life once spring gardening season arrives. A thorough cleaning, which should include cleaning the inside of greenhouse glass and washing flower pots and plant trays, also can prevent plant diseases from surviving into spring.

- Check for pests. Speak with a local gardening professional to determine if there are any local pests to look out for and how to recognize and remove these pests from gardens. Pests may hibernate in the soil over the

winter, and such unwelcome visitors can make it difficult for gardens to thrive come spring and summer.

- Assess plant location. If plants, flowers or gardens have struggled in recent years or never grew especially vibrant, then gardeners may want to assess the location of their plant life before spring gardening season begins. Some plants may not be getting enough sunlight in certain locations on a property, while others might be overexposed to the sun during spring and summer. Moving plants that are not thriving prior to the start of spring gardening season may be just what gardens need to flourish in the coming weeks.

Problems That Can Lead To Lawn Damage

A beautiful lawn is a goal for many homeowners. Some homeowners may find that lovely lawns may last momentarily, only to disappear when damage — be it pest, weather- or child-related — sets in.

While well-established turf can be resilient, even the most well-maintained lawns can be vulnerable. Preventing lawn damage first involves getting to the root of the problem.

- Lack of sunlight: All plants need the proper ratio of

sunlight to grow. Too much sunlight and plant blades can scorch. Too little sunlight and grass may turn brown and die. Although there are shade-tolerant varieties of grass, homeowners also can explore alternative landscapes. Work in a garden bed or create a design that utilizes gravel or mulch. Avoid aggressively pruning back trees to give the lawn more sunlight in that area, as this

may just damage the trees.

- Chemical spills: Gasoline and fertilizer spills and pesticide applications in high concentrations can cause the lawn to yellow or brown in spots. Carefully refill lawn gas tanks and fertilizer spreaders on the sidewalk or driveway to

avoid overflow onto the lawn. If spills occur, flood the area promptly with water to dilute.

- Foot traffic: Lawns can take a pounding from foot traffic, leading to compaction and spots of dead lawn. Try to redirect the traffic elsewhere to give worn down areas a break. Aeration can relieve soil compaction. If a certain area has become

the de facto pathway, install a paver, gravel or concrete walkway in that spot.

- Debris: Leaving a tool, kids' toys, piece of wood, or any debris on the lawn can quickly suffocate the grass beneath and cause the lawn to die quickly. Make sure that no items are left on the lawn for an extended period of time.
- Mowing patterns: Running

the mower in the same pattern over and over can cause ruts in the grass that lead to damage, so avoid mowing in the same direction on consecutive cuts. Avoid mowing on very hot days or when the lawn is soggy. Both can cause tracks to form in the lawn.

- Mowers: Dull lawn mower blades can damage lawns, as can mowing too fast. Grass blades can be torn, snapped and more, resulting in brown spots.

- Wildlife: Animals and insects can destroy turf roots. Animals or insects may feed on the grass from underneath its surface, compromising the lawn's ability to procure nutrients and water. Animals like moles or raccoons may feed on grubs in the lawn, and treating for grubs can alleviate torn-up turf.

Lawns can be hearty, but they're also highly susceptible to damage. Even seemingly harmless things can compromise the integrity of a lawn. Understanding the causes of lawn damage can help homeowners protect their lawns.



Walking on the lawn can cause soil compaction that eventually leads to damage.

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Three provincial parks will remain open five weeks longer than usual this season to meet public demand. Mira River Provincial Park in Cape Breton, which used to close on Sept. 12, will stay open until Oct. 15. Blomidon Provincial Park in Kings County and Ellenwood Lake Provincial Park in Yarmouth County, used to close on Sept. 5 but will now stay open until Oct. 9. The number of camper nights booked in provincial parks open in September and October has almost doubled over the last four seasons. Parks open in the fall months have seen an increase in camper nights from 5,732 in 2012 to 10,154 in 2016. The province's campsite reservation line for the 2017 season opened April 2. Campers seeking to reserve sites in any provincial parks can book a campsite at 1-888-544-3434. Reservations may also be made online at <https://parks.novascotia.ca>.

Government is committing more than \$13 million, over the next three years, to SHIFT: Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population. By 2030 more than one in four Nova Scotians will be aged 65 and over. Nova Scotia's first comprehensive action plan on aging identifies a dozen priority commitments with more than 50 specific actions. The plan focuses on helping older Nova Scotians stay involved and connected to their communities, promoting healthy living and keeping older adults in the workforce. Initiatives include: helping older Nova Scotians stay in their homes longer; improving access to affordable, healthy foods for vulnerable older adults; highlighting the benefits to employers of hiring older workers and creating age-friendly workplaces; working with partner organizations to promote mentorship opportunities for older adults; supporting community transportation with a focus on rural communities; helping older adults share and develop food and nutrition skills and knowledge; promoting physical activity and regular exercise at all ages, including middle-aged and older adults, with a strong emphasis on walking and giving communities funding for age-friendly planning. For more information and to access the full plan, visit www.novascotia.ca/shift

The new Atlantic Immigration Pilot launched at the beginning of March helps employers in the Atlantic region fill their labour gaps with foreign workers and international graduates. About 120 companies have submitted applications to participate in the program in Nova Scotia, the first step in the process. Twelve employers were designated within the first few days, and another 50 companies were expected to be designated by the end of March. To learn more employers should contact the Office of Immigration at 1-877-292-9597 or email immigration@novascotia.ca.

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