

Landscape Improvements Now Will Pay Big Dividends Next Spring

KRISTA HARDING – HORTICULTURE AGENT

Fall and spring are my favorite seasons, and after a long, hot summer, the arrival of cooler temperatures makes it much easier to enjoy spending time outdoors. While you're taking in the beauty of the season, consider tackling a few landscape projects now that will reward you with a healthier, more colorful landscape next spring.

Tackle Lawn Weeds This Fall

As the mowing season winds down, lawn weeds are probably the last thing on your mind. However, fall is actually the best time to control many common broadleaf weeds.

Cool-season weeds such as henbit, dandelions, and chickweed germinate during the cool, moist conditions of September and October. These weeds spend the winter as small, often unnoticed plants before growing rapidly and flowering in spring.

Fall herbicide applications are particularly effective because weeds are actively storing nutrients in their roots for winter. When a leaf-applied herbicide is absorbed during this period, it moves into the root system, providing more complete control. Since the weeds are also small and actively growing, they are easier to eliminate now than in the spring.

Several herbicides are effective for fall weed control. Products containing 2,4-D alone or in combination with MCPP and dicamba are commonly sold under trade names such as Trimec®, Weed-B-Gon®, and Weed-Out®. Weed Free Zone® is another option, containing those same active ingredients plus carfentrazone for enhanced control.

If you recently seeded a lawn, wait until the new grass has been mowed 2 or 3 times before applying herbicides, as directed by the product label. As always, carefully read and follow all label directions.

Plant Spring-Flowering Bulbs Now

Fall is also the ideal time to plant spring-flowering bulbs. Bulbs add vibrant color, varied bloom times, and interesting textures to the landscape, making them a valuable addition to almost any garden.

Bulbs can be planted in many locations, including around house foundations, beneath deciduous trees and shrubs, along borders, in perennial beds, rock gardens, containers, and even on slopes. When planted in groups of twelve or more, bulbs create a much greater visual impact than individual plants scattered throughout the landscape.

Foundation plantings are especially attractive. Evergreen shrubs provide an excellent backdrop, allowing the bright colors of tulips, daffodils, and other bulbs to stand out in early spring. Borders along lawns and flower beds can also benefit from the color and interest that bulbs provide.

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Bulbs fit particularly well into perennial gardens because they bloom in March, April, and May before most perennials begin active growth. Just be sure to position them so their fading foliage can mature without becoming too noticeable.

Containers offer another versatile option. Spring-flowering bulbs can be moved out of sight after blooming while their foliage matures, while summer-flowering bulbs can provide color all season long on patios, decks, and other outdoor living spaces.

For the greatest visual impact, plant bulbs in masses of a single variety or color. Tulips and daffodils generally look best when planted in groups of at least twelve bulbs, while smaller bulbs may require groups of fifty or more to create a noticeable display.

A little effort this fall can make a big difference next spring. By controlling weeds now and planting bulbs before winter arrives, you can enjoy a healthier, weed-free lawn and a landscape bursting with color when warmer weather returns.

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