



Grass Roots

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Thank you to our clients that have returned their 2017 service agreements. A special thank you to all of those that returned them by December 31, 2016.

The following are each winners of a \$50.00 Lowe's gift card:

- ◇ Ron & Susan A.
- ◇ Clayton W.
- ◇ Dean J.
- ◇ Dave P.
- ◇ Jeffrey D.
- ◇ Michelle E.
- ◇ Eugenia P.
- ◇ Gracie C.
- ◇ Edgar S.
- ◇ Frank K.

The winner of the \$100.00 Lowe's gift card for returning their prepaid 2017 contract by December 31, 2016 is:

- ◇ Edgar S.

Thank you again! You will each receive your gift cards this month.

If you have not returned your contract yet, you still can send it in or you can [contact](#) the office to ensure your place on the 2017 schedule.



Reminders

1. Return 2017 contracts.
2. Schedule an appointment with a CM's landscape designer.
3. Schedule tree pruning and re-mulch.
4. Examine concrete for winter damage.

Turf Care Best Practices

In an era of increased regulation of pesticides (herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides), it is important to consider the role best practices play in establishing healthy turf. Best practices are the things we do to promote turf establishment from starting a lawn to keeping it going. Most of our customers have an established lawn, and our goal is to help them keep it in the best condition possible. Best practices in mowing, irrigation, aeration, fertilizer and over seeding determine turf density, which in turn affects the amount of pesticides needed to maintain turf.

Mowing

One of the more important practices, certainly in terms of the frequency with which it occurs, is mowing. We will focus on the home lawn and cool season grasses which make up the majority of the lawns for which we care.

- ◇ Mow cool season grasses at 3 to 3.5 inches, never removing more than one third of the leaf at one mowing. The taller the leaf structure, the deeper the root system, producing a stronger grass plant.
- ◇ If the turf is aggressively growing, you must mow more frequently. Failing to do so stresses turf.
- ◇ Mowing with a sharp blade is essential. Like any wound, the cleaner the cut, the faster the recovery, reducing the incidence of infection. A ragged edge invites disease.

Irrigation

Cool season grasses prefer to be dry rather than wet. It is much easier to correct a lack of moisture than it is to control disease from over-watering. The chief culprit in problems with irrigation is misuse of the irrigation system. Irrigation needs vary greatly throughout the growing season. There is no magic number of days or minutes to water. If turf shows signs of stress, such as it is off-color to a degree or it does not spring back when you walk on it, it is time to irrigate. Improved technologies will help with this process. For now, a great deal depends on the homeowner.

- ◇ Water infrequently, but deeply.
- ◇ Shaded areas require less water than full-sun areas.
- ◇ Be aware of slopes and run-off. It is better to water with multiple cycles to allow absorption to take place, than to let water runoff.
- ◇ Irrigate earlier in the morning. The winds are calmer so water remains more on target. The temperatures are lower, reducing evaporation. The turf canopy will have a chance to dry out throughout the day.
- ◇ Above all, make sure your system is in good working order.

Aeration

We continue to advocate for aeration twice a season. We believe that the clay content of the soil dictates the frequency. Aeration:

- ◇ Increases air circulation in the root zone, reducing the incidence of disease;
- ◇ Improves the uptake of water and nutrients;
- ◇ Reduces soil compaction.

Fertilization and Weed Control

We apply back-to-back pre-emergents in the spring with minimal nitrogen. Our goal is extended control of crabgrass while not promoting excessive top-growth. Mid-summer, we apply an insecticide as a preventive measure for the control of white grubs. In the late summer and fall, we will provide the bulk of the nitrogen for the year. We spot spray weeds as we see them and when control is optimal. We continue to stress that turf density is the biggest determinant to weed control.

Overseeding

Periodic overseeding is important to the overall health of the yard. The introduction of newer turf cultivars aids in disease resistance and drought tolerance. There are growing seasons, like 2016, when sustained high temperatures and high humidity take a toll on turf no matter what you and what we do as a team to mitigate the extremes. Overseeding is necessary to repair damage and to increase turf density.

Healthy lawns reduce the level of inputs (pesticides, fertilizers, water) we need to maintain them. We can enjoy our lawns and become better stewards of our natural resources.

Throughout the growing season, we will continue addressing issues as they arise, always emphasizing the role of best practices.





Ask The Arborist

What Can I Do When Animals Damage My Tree?

“Tree bark is the wallpaper of the landscape.” –Unknown

When the leaves have gone and the birds have flown south, what remains of winter seems like a still and empty void; however, when looking closely, you can see wildlife is still active. Squirrels, rabbits, deer, rodents and some birds are much-appreciated company during the dreary cold season. But what happens when the berries have been picked clean as well as seeds and nuts? Animals need to find another source of nutrition, sometimes to the detriment of our trees.

Fruit trees (including crabapples), maples, and oaks are just a few species that have sweet inner bark and are usually the first ones to be damaged by small animals. The damage can be from just a few nibbles to completely devastating the tree. Woodpeckers also can be found pecking away at the bark to try and get to borers, resulting in hole patterns throughout the tree. The wounds can weaken the tree by hindering the transportation of water and food. When spring arrives, injured bark also becomes an open door for insect and disease.

The good news is that once spring arrives, trees wake up, start growing and wounds begin to heal themselves. It might take a year or two depending on the severity of the damage. Any dead limbs can be pruned when necessary.



The circled portion shows squirrel teeth marks on this Maple tree.

What can you do about this? Prevention is key. Due to the growth rate of younger trees, they typically will heal faster than older trees. Healthier trees withstand and heal from damage better as well. If you are not already doing so, consider taking part CM's 4-step tree healthcare program. Tree wraps or cages can be beneficial in protecting the bark. Obviously, this will not protect the canopy of the tree, but it most certainly helps the trunk. Remember to remove the wraps or cages in spring. Do you have a bird feeder or a squirrel feeder? If wildlife in your yard have access to food elsewhere, the chances of them gnawing away at tender twigs goes down. Keep monitoring for damage and remember that it is never too late in the winter to protect your trees.



This is the same maple tree pictured to the left. This shows evidence of new and old damage as well as the healing callus.

Contact a CM's licensed arborist for a tree evaluation.



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