

**A Personal Message**

March means we're one step closer to spring. I'm all for anything that will bring warmer weather our way. This winter was one of the coldest in recent memory. It's been many years since I've seen the Chesapeake Bay frozen over.

To get from our home to the rest of the world, we have to cross the Oak Creek Bridge in Newcomb, MD. For several weeks this winter, the murky water was frozen. Not even oyster boats were going out.

Melissa's family from North Carolina was visiting during the coldest stretch of weather. Our ten year old nephew, Louie, hiked along the ice-encrusted shoreline with his Dad. They took pictures and collected horseshoe crab shells. Our seven year old niece, Katie, showed better judgment and stayed in the car with Melissa.

However, as I write this column, the weather has grown more temperate and my thoughts have turned to springtime pursuits. First, I need to let you know about what we've decided for this year's crops.

We've been busy planning our gardens and purchasing seeds. Remember, we like to start most of our plant material from seed. Our tomato crop is probably the single most important item in the garden in my humble estimation.

This year, I'm doing my usual blend of standard stock such as Early Girls and Big Boys. Then, I'll fill in with heirloom varieties. Black Russians and Mortgage Lifter tomatoes are striking my fancy this year.

My tomato motto is, "The uglier, the tomato, the better it tastes." I always enjoy trying to grow unusual types of tomatoes. Some of the strains of heirlooms date back a hundred years or more.

As you begin to think about gardening, please consider us for some of your plant material. Our greenhouse is beginning to bud and blossom as the days grow longer.

Over the next couple of months, we should have lots of perennials ready for planting. Azaleas will be ready for installation soon. We'll also have hostas and daylilies for sale. There are plenty of Japanese iris available too. Other perennial plants include Russian Sage, Salvia, Rudbeckia (black-eyed Susan's) and Echinacea (purple coneflowers).

These plants were grown in Maryland and will thrive in this climate. They are healthy and can provide a beautiful addition to your landscaping. Please call us for further information regarding pricing and availability.



- LANDSCAPE MAINT
- NATURAL/ORGANIC
- NATURAL DEER REP

Our niece and nephew, Katie & Louie Saunders, posed for our lawn care truck. They are pictured beside the truck, during their recent visit. Look how they've grown in just three short years!

## March Garden Tips

- It's the perfect time to clean out those garden beds and get them ready for spring. You don't want winter debris to slow you down when you get the itch to plant. Weed the gardens and cut back any scraggly perennials. Leaves need to be removed one final time also. Consider using a good pre-emergent to prevent weed growth this year. If you apply pre-emergent now, you won't have to call me to pull weeds as often.
- Prune your roses before the buds break into bloom.
- You should be able to plant shrubbery later this month. You'll want the ground to warm up a bit before planting.
- If you're considering an herb garden this year, be sure to always plant your herbs in the same location each season. Some herbs, such as dill, are volunteers. Their seeds will sprout each year and you may not have to plant it again. Other herbs, such as rosemary and lavender are perennials. You'll have a wonderfully varied and textured herb garden.
- Try your hand at designing a perennial border. Indigenous perennials are almost foolproof. A border, whether for a sidewalk or along the edge of a property line, lends an air of permanence to any landscape. If you need assistance, remember we have a designer on staff and we may be able to help.



Dave Lee is our resident landscape designer. We caught him right after he completed a color scale design for a property in St. Michaels, MD.

## Lawn Mowing

I would like to introduce a new service that we now offer. It's the most basic service of all landscaping and that is grass cutting.

For years, we have used a variety of subcontractors when clients asked us to mow their lawns. However, we have decided that we'd like better control over when and how lawns are mowed. So, I decided to bite the bullet and invest in mowing equipment.

We purchased two commercial Bob-Cat mowers for wide open spaces. We also have a small push mower for those areas close to the house and around landscape beds.

We provide trimming service with weedeaters around your garden areas. And, no job is complete without blowing off the walkways and driveway areas.

Remember, we advocate the benefits of taller mowing heights. The generally recommended height of three inches is best for the health of your lawn. Shorter grass has a shallow root system that leaves the plant susceptible to disease.

If we can assist you with cutting your grass this year, please give us a call.

## Caring for Your Lawn

By the time you read this newsletter, you will probably have received several pieces of mail from us about our natural/organic lawn care program.

I hope you'll consider us for your lawn care needs this season. More and more organic products and services are becoming available.

As consumer demand grows for organic solutions, we can begin to reduce our dependence on synthetic products that most companies use.

If nothing else, our proximity to the Chesapeake Bay should cause you to consider the harm that chemical fertilizers can do to our water supplies. Organic lawn care can significantly reduce this type of pollution. We guarantee that your lawn will be healthier too.

## Natural/Organic Lawn Care

Congratulations to the businesses across the country who have introduced organic products and services during the past year. Most notably, Wal-Mart has introduced their proprietary brand of green cleaning products. SC Johnson has also upgraded many of their products. Windex and Clorox now profess to be environmentally responsible.

These are all positive steps. Our family has mostly been using all natural cleaning products for years and it is good to now have mainstream choices. These businesses should be applauded for their commitment to the environment.

We have a commitment to the environment too. For the past seven years, we have offered a total package of lawn care that is also good for the environment.

Of course, we use organic fertilizer. The run off from our fertilizer doesn't harm local waterways. But, our program encompasses much more than this.

We come to your property five times during the course of the growing season to provide the services your lawn needs. Our program addresses necessary fertilizer and lime applications. These applications include disease and fungus controls along with natural insect deterrents.

In fact, the only part of our program that is not natural and organic is weed control. During the seven years that we have offered this program, we have not been able to combat weeds with any organic products. We've tried white vinegar and water. (It doesn't work.) We've purchased numerous weed products that are touted as organic. (They don't work either.)

So, at this time, we continue to use commercial grade weed controls as the only non-organic part of our lawn care program. Unfortunately, it's the only effective method of controlling weeds that we know.

Our program places a great deal of emphasis on basic cultural practices. Aeration is the single most important step that we can complete for your lawn. This is a process that relieves compaction of the soil and allows nutrients to reach the root zone more quickly. Core aeration leaves a "plug" of soil on the surface of lawn that breaks down in 1-2 weeks.

There are other numerous examples of basic cultural practices. Proper mowing heights are crucial for a healthy lawn. The recommended height is approximately three inches. Grass that is mowed lower causes unnecessary stress and may allow insects and disease to gain a foothold in the lawn.

Your lawn should be watered 2-3 times a week during dry weather. It is best to water heavily during the early morning hours to reduce the chance of fungus in the grass.

We can offer additional recommendations that will benefit your lawn. Call us for a no-cost, no-obligation appointment. We'll be glad to meet with you to review the health of your lawn.





Our lawn care technician is spreading grass seed around the edges of a landscape bed. We always pay attention to the details. He is making sure that the seed is spread evenly over the entire lawn.