

IT'S *Spring* GARDENING TIME

Yard work does have rewards

By HERB LAWRENCE
Copley News Service

Some people love to tinker in the yard, while others would just as soon let the grass die as water it. Fighting those ever-present weeds and making sure the garden looks good can be frustrating chores.

But a house or condominium would look much poorer without the softening of landscaping. Having adequate landscaping is a vital necessity, and one has to learn to deal with the problems of taking care of plants and ground covers.

One landscaping expert says a garden doesn't have to be a problem for either new or existing housing if the job is handled logically and in a simple fashion.

That expert is Joe Taylor, a vice president of a major home builder.

One of Taylor's jobs is to oversee the installation of lawns, shrubs and trees at model complexes and at homes where landscaping is included.

Nurseries are a big help in landscaping, Taylor said. "They can give you some good specific advice. Don't hesitate to ask nurserymen what to do."

"That's their business, and they can solve a lot of problems for you," he said.

The best period of the year to start something new in a garden is normally spring or the time just before spring blows in.



Copley News Service photo

Installing covering

Joe Taylor, at left, supervises as Dave Wade and Luis Guerrero install ground cover landscaping.

"That's the key growth period and it's best to begin then," he said.

Proper landscaping for every house or condominium and the upkeep of that landscaping makes good sense, Taylor said.

"It makes the dwelling look better to other people, should make it more pleasant for you while living there and make the property more valuable in a resale," he said.

Lawns in front and back are still in, he said. But they may not

be in the future.

Using ground covers such as ice plants also is a good idea in a landscaping plan. Many ground covers need little maintenance and care.

Taylor also likes to include

trees in his landscaping, but cautions that the roots of a tree can cause problems to a driveway or sidewalk. Trees have to be planted far enough away from concrete covers so they won't expand and crack a driveway or sidewalk.

Such roots also could play havoc on home foundations.

"So you can't plant that closely," he said.

The location of the trees must be planned properly, he said. "You should consult a nursery on the locations when you buy the baby trees," he said.

Before any landscaping is put in, Taylor said, the owner of a home should have the soil tested.

"I think this is essential," he said. "The test will tell you what nutrients the soil needs."

The cost of such a test is nominal, and it can be performed by most nurseries.

Some of his other tips:

— Make sure you plant young trees in large enough holes. Nurseries can advise on proper size. If the holes aren't large enough for the roots, the tree isn't going to do well.

— Don't put plants in natural drainage channels set up in the grading of the property.

Start early to enjoy lawn

By DONALD GRAND
Copley News Service

Spending a few hours outdoors can make your lawn green and your shrubs and flowers more beautiful for the whole family to enjoy.

Here is a basic plan from Scotts, a maker of lawn-care products, to give you the most enjoyment from your lawn and garden.

— **Cleanup.** Rake up any debris. It can smother new growth.

— **Fertilize your lawn in the early spring.** Every lawn needs this. There simply is not enough natural nitrogen and other nutrients in soil to meet the needs of a thick green lawn. Use a controlled-release fertilizer that will give the lawn a steady, controlled feeding for six to eight weeks. Make a second application in late spring.

— **Seed if needed.** Early spring is a fine time to do this, before weeds have a chance to fill in the gaps and bare patches. But don't waste money by just throwing down seeds. Slice or scratch up the ground first so the grass seeds have a place to lodge. Fertilize the same day you seed with a fertilizer for starting new seedlings.

Once the seed germinates, keep the ground continuously moist.

— **Fertilize shrubs and trees.**

Early spring also is a good time to surface feed with a dry, granular fertilizer so your plants can take full advantage of the coming growing season. No need to dig up, just spread the material on the soil surface as directed.

— **Mowing.** For your existing lawn, mow as soon as the grass starts to grow again and the weather is nice. Cut off a half inch or so. This will let more sunlight into the crown of the grass plants to stimulate growth.

If you have seeded a new lawn or reseeded bare spots, mow as soon as there is anything to cut. Mowing height should be 1½ to 2 inches.

— **Coping with dandelions and other weeds.** An excellent time to go after dandelions and similar broadleaf weeds is when they are in bloom, and the best way to go after them is with weed control absorbed through the leaves. This coincides with the time that lawns are in need of late spring feeding, so home owners can do both jobs at once by using a combination product that feeds as it weeds.

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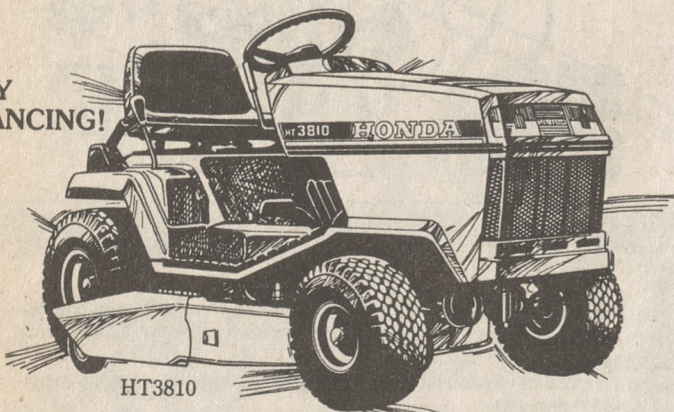
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