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**LAWN &  
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**SHOWCASE**

**The Mendota Reporter**  
**Wednesday, May 12, 2021**

# Stay safe when working in the yard this spring and summer

A day spent working in the yard is an ideal way to pass the time on spring and summer afternoons. A pristine landscape can add value to a property and instill pride in homeowners who put a lot of thought and effort into their lawns and gardens.

A sun-soaked day can make it easy to overlook potential threats when working in a lawn or garden. But safety precautions are of the utmost necessity when working in the yard, where the risk for serious injury is considerable. For example, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons reports that, in 2016, more than 90,000 patients, including nearly 5,000 children, were treated in hospital emergency rooms for lawn mower-related injuries.

Lawn- and garden-related injuries can be prevented without going to great lengths.

- Know your terrain before mowing. Knowing the terrain in your own yard can reduce the risk for accident or injury. This can be especially important when mowing the lawn with a riding mower. Adhere to

manufacturers' recommendations regarding inclines to reduce tip-over accidents that can pin riders beneath the mower. Study hilly areas of the yard prior to mowing so you know which areas are safe to mow with a riding mower and which areas are best mowed with a walk-behind mower. For greater control when using a walk-behind mower on an incline, mow parallel to the slope.

- Apply and reapply sunscreen. Sunburns may not require trips to the emergency room, but they can still be serious. In fact, the Skin Cancer Foundation notes that sunburn is a leading cause in the majority of cases of basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma, which is the deadliest form of skin cancer. The SCF recommends applying sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside to allow the sunscreen to bond to your skin. Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours, and more often if you're sweating excessively. The SCF recommends broad spectrum sunscreens, which protect the skin from both UVA and



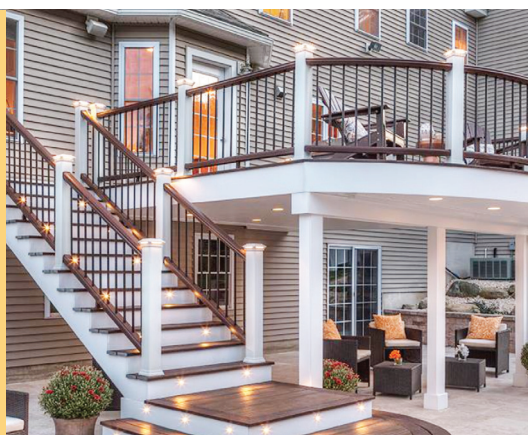
**Know your terrain before mowing in your own yard to reduce the risk for accident or injury.**

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UVB rays. Though a product with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 is acceptable when walking the dog or driving to work, the SCF advises using a product with an SPF of 30 or higher when engaging in extended outdoor activities like gardening or mowing.

- Employ the buddy system. Use the buddy system when pruning tall trees or performing any tasks that require a ladder. The Orthopedic Institute of Pennsylvania reports that more than 164,000 people are injured each year falling off a ladder. Ask a signifi-

cant other or neighbor to hold the ladder in place while you climb up to reduce your risk of falling. If cutting large branches, cut them piecemeal to reduce the risk of being injured by heavy falling branches.

- Inspect the property for insect hives. The OIP notes that the most common insect stings in spring come from bees, wasps and hornets. Homeowners who are not careful can inadvertently come across hives when doing spring cleanup, making them vulnerable to bites and stings. That can be very dangerous for anyone,

and especially so for people with a history of allergic reactions to insect bites or stings. Inspect areas where you'll be working to make sure insects haven't put down roots in your property. If you discover any hives and are hesitant to remove them on your own, contact a local landscaping firm.

Lawn and garden accidents and injuries can be serious. Thankfully, accidents and injuries are easily prevented when homeowners take a few simple safety precautions while tending to their lawns and gardens.

## How to reduce risk for Lyme disease

When the weather warms up and hours of daylight increase, few people can resist the allure of the great outdoors. Nature beckons each spring, and those answering that call must do so safely.

Lyme disease is a potential threat for people who live in certain regions. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that Lyme disease cases have been reported in nearly every state, though residents in certain states are more vulnerable than others. For example, CDC data indicates that incidence rates were highest in several states in New England, including Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, while rates in Oklahoma, Missouri and Wyoming were especially low.

Lyme disease is spread by the bite of an infected tick. Playing, hiking, camping, or working in wooded or grassy places where instances of Lyme disease are high increases a person's risk of being bitten. But that doesn't mean those in areas like New England, the mid-Atlantic or the upper-Midwest must avoid such activities. However, they should take steps to prevent tick bites when going out into the great outdoors.

• Recognize where ticks live. The CDC reports that blacklegged ticks cause Lyme disease and that such ticks live in moist and humid environments. In addition, the Lyme Disease Association notes that ticks are most likely to be in certain areas, including woods, areas where woods meet lawns and

where lawns meet fields. Ticks also may be living in tall brush/grass, under leaves, under ground cover, near stone walls or wood piles, or in shady areas. Ticks also may be drawn to areas around bird feeders or outdoor areas designated for pets.

• Wear insect repellent.

The CDC recommends wearing insect repellents registered with the Environmental Protection Agency. Repellents should contain DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol, or 2-undecanone. The EPA even has a tool on its website that can help people choose the right repellent products for them. That tool can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-repellent-right-you>. The CDC advises people to treat clothing and gear, including socks and tents, with products containing 0.5 percent permethrin, which can remain protective even after several washings. Pre-treated clothing may be protective even longer.

• Check for ticks every day. Ticks can be found anywhere on the body, and the CDC recommends checking for ticks every day. Pay particular attention to underarms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, the back of the knees, in and around all head and body hair, between the legs, and around the waist.

Ticks pose a threat when spending time in the great outdoors. Various preventive measures can help people reduce their risk for Lyme disease.



Various preventive measures can help people reduce their risk for Lyme disease.

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## Lawn watering and fertilizing techniques

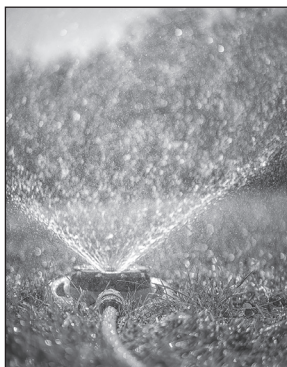
A lush, green lawn is a sight to behold. Many variables are involved in growing and maintaining grass, and water and fertilizer are among the most important components.

Knowing how much water and fertilizer to apply and when to apply it can make a big difference in the appearance and health of a lawn. That's because a well-fed and watered lawn will develop a better root system, which makes the lawn less vulnerable to stressors like drought, mowing, foot traffic, and heat, according to the Scotts® company.

### Fertilize

There is no magic formula governing when to fertilize a lawn. The type of grass and how well-established a lawn is must be considered. Experts suggest having the soil tested to determine its pH levels and if any nutrients are lacking. A fertilizing schedule can then be developed after testing.

Keep in mind that over-feeding a lawn will not make



it grow any better and actually can damage the turf. Several small applications of fertilizer during the lawn's most active growing period may be helpful, advises the home improvement resource Tools Around the House. An annual application (late spring for warm-season grass or fall for cool-season grass) may be all that's needed.

Certain fertilizers need to be applied and watered in. Others may be combined with weed-control products and must be set on top of damp grass. Read packaging to determine the right application.

### Water

The right watering schedule and techniques can help a lawn thrive. Scotts® says adjusting for climate and nature can help grass to grow strongly. A lawn that has a grayish cast or appears dull green is telling an owner that it needs water. Another test is to step on the lawn. If footprints disappear quickly, the grass blades have enough moisture to spring back.

Water the lawn in the morning before 10 a.m. when it's cooler and the winds tend to be calm so that the water can soak in. For those who must water at night, do so in early evening so that the water can dry before nightfall and will not contribute to disease.

Scotts® says to water an established lawn until the top six to eight inches of soil is wet. Most lawns need one to 1.5 inches of water per week from rain or a hose to soak the soil that deeply.

Newly established lawns may require more water to keep the soil moist but not soggy.



The Northern red oak is a popular shade tree that can add beauty to a landscape and make it more comfortable come the dog days of summer.

## Shade trees that can make yards more comfortable

Various factors motivate the decisions homeowners make when designing their landscapes. Some may be motivated by the ways additions will affect the resale value of their homes, while others may be guided by a love for a particular type of plant. Comfort is yet another motivator, and shade trees can make yards more comfortable as the mercury rises. According to the Arbor Day Foundation, the following are some popular shade trees that can add beauty to a landscape and make it more comfortable come the dog days of summer.

- Quaking aspen: The quaking aspen has the widest natural range of any tree in North America, spanning 47 degrees of latitude, 110 degrees of longitude (nine time zones) and elevations from sea level to timberline. That impressive range is no doubt why the United States Forest Service notes that the quaking aspen can grow in greatly diverse regions, environments and communities.

- Northern catalpa: The Arbor Day Foundation notes that the northern catalpa is easily identifiable thanks to its heart-shaped leaves and twisting trunks and branches. Nature enthusiasts, and particularly those who enjoy birdwatching, may be happy to learn that the flowers of the catalpa are frequently visited by hummingbirds.

- Red sunset maple: Its name alone makes many people think of lazy summer days spent lounging in the yard. The red sunset maple provides ample shade and comes with the added benefit of producing an awe-inspiring blend of red and orange leaves come the fall. Red sunset maples can survive in a range of habitats and their adaptable roots means they can thrive in various soil types.

- Northern red oak: The state tree of New Jersey, the northern red oak is, according to the Arbor Day Foundation, both beloved for its aesthetic appeal and valued for its adaptability and usefulness. Northern red oaks can tolerate urban conditions, but they do not do well in hot climates.

- Sawtooth oak: Another tree that produces some awe-inspiring color, the sawtooth oak is a durable, adaptable shade tree. Golden yellow leaves in the spring will give way to dark green in summer, only to turn yellow and golden brown in the fall. The Tree Center Plant Supply Co. notes that the sawtooth oak can thrive in warmer climates where shade trees that can coexist with high temperatures can be hard to find.

Shade trees can add beauty to a property and make a yard more comfortable. Homeowners are urged to discuss shade trees with a local lawn and garden professional prior to planting.

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# Sod vs. seed: Which is your best option?

A pristine lawn can be the finishing touch to a landscape and add significant value to a home. According to a joint study by the University of Alabama and the University of Texas at Arlington, homes with high curb appeal sell for an average of 7 percent more than similar houses without inviting exteriors.

When it comes to establishing a lawn, homeowners have two key options: starting from seed or installing sod. Each comes with its share of advantages and disadvantages. Which option makes the most sense for a given lawn will boil down to various factors, including homeowners' budgets.

### Seed

Seed is the first thing homeowners may think of when planning a lawn. Seed is an inexpensive, easily installed option. Plus, garden centers sell a variety of seeds specific to particular regions and climates. The home improvement resource Fixr says seed will cost an average of 24 cents per square foot installed compared to \$1.29 for sod. That affordability compels many homeowners to turn to seed. However, seed can take up

to two years to produce a lush lawn and it requires high maintenance in the initial months to establish the grass.

Seed also requires greater soil preparation, including tilling to loosen soil and keeping the lawn well watered until the grass is hardy. Weeds also may mix in with seed more readily, meaning weed prevention becomes an additional task.

### Sod

One of the advantages to sod is that it can produce an instant lawn. When time is of the essence, sod will produce a complete lawn nearly as soon as the sod is laid. Sod can be used to mitigate soil erosion, as it works faster than seed, which needs to establish a root system to keep soil in check. Also, sod does not require as much soil preparation as seed.

The potential disadvantages to sod are its cost and the time it takes to install it, particularly on a large property. In addition, sod will require careful maintenance for at least the first two weeks until the sod takes stronger roots. It can be an expensive mistake if sod doesn't thrive and new pieces need to



be installed. The Family Handyman says sod tends to be sun-loving and may not work in shadier areas of a property.

Sod and seed are the two main options

for lush lawns. Each has its perks, and homeowners can speak with a local lawn specialist to determine which option is best for their lawn.



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# How ergonomic tools can help gardeners

Gardening is a rewarding activity that has been found to provide a host of benefits beyond ensuring readily available access to fresh fruits, vegetables and awe-inspiring blooms.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says many gardening tasks qualify as light to moderate exercise, which means raking the leaves and cutting the grass can be just as beneficial as cardiovascular activities like brisk walking or jogging. In addition, a 2017 study published in the journal *Preventive Medicine Reports* found that gardening can help aging men and women offset age-related weight gain. And the health benefits of gardening go beyond the physical. In 2014, a systematic review of randomized controlled trials published in *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* concluded that horticultural therapy may be an effective treatment for people with dementia.

Gardeners have a host of tools at their disposal to help turn their lawns and gardens into awe-inspiring landscapes. Among those options are ergonomic tools. Ergonomic tools can benefit gardeners of all ages, but they may prove especially valuable for aging men and women.



**Ergonomic tools can benefit gardeners of all ages, but they may prove especially valuable for aging men and women.**

*How ergonomic tools differ from traditional gardening tools*

Ergonomic gardening tools are designed to ensure that using them has as little effect on the body as possible. Ergonomic tools align with how a person naturally moves his or her body, which can reduce the likelihood that gardeners will suffer any strains or sprains while gardening or experience any aches and pains after a day spent tending to their landscapes.

*Choosing the right tools*

The West Virginia University Center for Excel-

lence in Disabilities notes that gardeners will know they have chosen the right ergonomic gardening tool for the job when they do not have to adapt the tool. Ergonomic tools should match gardeners' heights, fit their grip and feel comfortable when in use.

*Specific benefits of ergonomic tools*

Ergonomic gardening tools are designed in a way that can reduce stress on the body while performing various tasks. Gardeners know that aches and pains can add up after a day spent kneeling in the garden, raking soil and carrying supplies from a shed or garage around the property. But the WVUCED

notes that ergonomic tools do more than just reduce gardeners' risk of injury.

- Ergonomic tools increase efficiency. Wasted motions are less likely when using ergonomic tools. That can improve efficiency in the garden, allowing gardeners to get more done in the same amount of time. And because ergonomic tools are designed to work with the body, gardeners likely won't need to take breaks due to aches and pains, which also makes it easier to be more efficient when working in the garden.

- Ergonomic tools increase gardeners' capabilities. The WVUCED notes that principles behind ergonomics keep gardeners using the tools in natural positions. That means gardeners won't lose power to bending and twisting, enabling them to do more in the garden than they might be able to do when using non-ergonomic tools.

Gardening is a rewarding and beneficial activity. The right ergonomic tools for the job can enhance those benefits and make gardening even more enjoyable.



## Exterior lighting can add ambiance to a property

The value of the right lighting in a home is undeniable. Lighting can instantly transform a room and create the ambiance homeowners are looking to establish. Though it might be mostly seen as a way to create mood inside a home, lighting also can do much for lawns and gardens.

Backyards have come a long way over the last several decades. Once reserved as play areas for children and stomping grounds for the family dog, backyards have become oases for homeowners and their families. Outdoor living areas are wildly popular, and no such area is complete without exterior lighting. In fact, a recent report from the National Association of Home Builders found that 85 percent of home buyers want exterior lighting, making it the second most desired outdoor feature (patios topped that list).

When installing exterior lighting around their landscapes, homeowners can keep various tips in mind to create a relaxing, awe-inspiring mood on their properties at night.

- Consider uplights. Uplights are installed in the ground and direct light up at a tree, focusing on its trunk or canopy. This creates a dramatic effect that makes it possible to enjoy majestic trees at night just like you might when spending time

in the yard during the day.

- Focus on trees. Many homeowners already have exterior lighting lining their walkways and patios, but focusing on trees can create an entirely different look. Though it's possible to install exterior tree lighting on your own, landscaping professionals with lighting experience know which fixtures will pair most effectively with the trees around your property and how to arrange them for maximum effect.

- Opt for warm light. Warm white light creates an inviting feel around the property. The exterior lighting experts at Utah Lights acknowledge that choice of lighting is up to homeowners but also note that, in situations with lower levels of ambient light, such as in exterior lights around a property, people typically prefer warmer light. That's because warm light tends to be easier on the eyes and directs attention to the features of the landscape, which is many homeowners' goal when installing exterior lighting in their yards.

- Utilize a timer. Modern exterior lighting timers make it easier than ever to control the lights outside a home. Many such timers even adjust for the changing seasons and the shifting hours of daylight. That means homeowners shouldn't have to tinker with the timer once it's set.

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Though planted perennials require less maintenance than annuals, they are not completely maintenance-free.

## How to care for perennials

Perennials can add color and vibrancy to any garden. One of the more desirable components of perennials is that they come back year after year, meaning homeowners do not have to invest in a gardenful of new flowers every year. That can add up to considerable savings. Perennials often form the foundation of beautiful gardens.

Annuals only grow for one season, produce seeds and then die. However, perennials die back to the ground every autumn and their roots survive the winter. So the plants reemerge in the spring, according to The Farmer's Almanac. Some perennials are short-lived, meaning they will come back a few consecutive years; others will last for decades.

Though planted perennials require less maintenance than annuals, they are not completely maintenance-free. Certain care is needed to help perennials thrive, and that starts with the soil. In fact, soil is the single most important

factor for growing healthy plants. Penn State Extension says most perennials grow ideally in well drained, fertile soil with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0. In addition, organic matter can improve soil texture and water-holding ability.

When including perennials in the garden, make sure you wait for the right time to plant them. The ideal time is during the spring or fall. Perennials come as container-grown perennials, which already have been established in the soil. Bare-root perennials are just roots that are often packed in peat moss. In order to plant bare-root perennials, soak the roots in water for several minutes before gently planting in the ground, indicates the how-to resource Tip Bulletin.

Perennials should be watered deeply, especially during the first growing season. However, the soil should never be overly dry or wet. Most perennials do not need to be fertilized heavily. A single application in the spring typically

is all that's needed.

Care along the way can include deadheading spent flowers so that plants can use their energy on seed production and reblooming. Perennials should be divided when they grow large, every three to four years when the plants are not in bloom. Perennials produce fewer flowers or may look sickly when the time has passed to divide them. Early spring often is a good time to divide perennials, advises The Farmer's Almanac.

A thick layer of mulch can help perennials to overwinter successfully. Perennials planted in containers will need to be transplanted into the garden before it gets cold because most containers cannot thoroughly insulate perennial roots.

Apart from these strategies, perennials pretty much take care of themselves. As long as sunlight requirements match plant needs, the perennials should thrive.

## Plants that can keep bugs away from outdoor living spaces

Outdoor living spaces have become increasingly popular among homeowners in recent years, and that popularity grew even more over the last year. As social distancing guidelines issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged people to stay home as much as possible, a desire for accessible, enjoyable outdoor spaces grew. A 2020 study of Google trends data from the home decor retailer Living Spaces found that searches for items such as patio daybeds and small-space outdoor furniture grew by more than 200 percent between the early part of 2020 and the middle of the year.

If outdoor living spaces are in demand, so, too, are ways to make those spaces as comfortable as possible. There's much homeowners can do to make the most of their outdoor spaces, but they might feel helpless against some unwanted, often relentless guests: insects. Insects can turn relaxing days on the patio into wars of attrition with hungry bugs like mosquitoes. Thankfully, there are ways to fight back against insects while simultaneously adding a little aesthetic appeal to the backyard. The Farmer's Almanac notes that planting these insect-repelling plants around the patio or backyard can help homeowners successfully repel unwanted insects, including mosquitoes.

- **Lavender:** Lavender is a fragrant plant that adds a pop of purple and has been known to repel mosquitoes, fleas, flies, and moths.

- **Basil:** Basil can provide the best of both worlds, as it's been found to repel flies and moths and also makes for a tasty addition to pasta



*Lavender*

sauces and other dishes.

- **Thyme:** Also a valuable ingredient to keep in the kitchen, thyme can help keep hungry mosquitoes at bay.

- **Mint:** The Farmer's Almanac warns that it's easy to overplant mint, so homeowners should only plant with care and make a concerted effort to prevent overgrowth. Also great in the kitchen, mint has long been considered an effective mosquito repellent.

- **Alliums:** Like lavender, alliums can add a burst of purple to your patio. And though they aren't believed to repel mosquitoes, alliums have been found to be helpful against cabbage worms, aphids, carrot flies, and slugs.

- **Chrysanthemums:** If ants are drawing homeowners' ire, chrysanthemums may do the trick. These eye-catching flowers also are believed to repel fleas and roaches, among other insects.

- **Marigolds:** The scent of this awe-inspiring plant is known to repel mosquitoes and other pests. Marigolds also attract insects like ladybugs that are known to consume aphids, which are minute bugs that reproduce rapidly and feed by sucking sap from plants.

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