



Lawns, Shrubs And Plants: Best Practices For A Successful Lawn

Lawn Doctor's agronomist provides insight into the right care for lawns and shrubs

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Birds chirping, flowers budding, days lasting longer...the telltale signs of springtime are here. While it may feel great to shed your winter jacket and snow boots, with spring comes the often dreaded chore of yard work. Watering, weed whacking, trimming and mowing can quickly take over precious weekend hours, especially if you don't know what you're doing. [ESTATENVY](#) put together some top tips on how to make sure your lawn is luscious and green all summer.

Hire an Expert to Lay Out a Program

When faced with the daunting task of creating a lawn and plant care program, many homeowners opt for a DIY method, which can lead to many hours spent in the yard, a greater risk for disease and, ultimately, a higher cost for an expert to fix it after the fact. According to

Chris Sherrington, agronomist for [Lawn Doctor, a lawn care franchise](#), lawn care can be a combination of DIY and expert help.

“The biggest mistake that homeowners make with lawn care is not following a program. They just go out, put one application of product down per year, and expect it to survive,” said Sherrington. “It’s very easy to go out and buy a weed-and-feed fertilizer product from Home Depot or Lowe’s. But, what homeowners often don’t understand is that they need to follow a program and apply product five to six times per season to maintain any weeds that come up and continually adding nutrition each month, which is what a lawn requires.”

Sherrington adds that tough grass requires four to five pounds of nitrogen per thousand square feet in growing season and that applying that amount in one application is impossible. Following a program with regular applications throughout the warmer month is what keeps lawns and plants healthy.

Be Conscious of Watering

When it comes to watering lawns and plants, less is actually more.

“A lot of people tend to overwater and think that once an irrigation system is installed, you can just set it and forget it -- but that’s not the case,” said Sherrington. “They need to revisit the irrigation system and adjust the run times every month to six weeks depending on the climate. We recommend that the soil is wet from six to eight inches deep.”

Sherrington adds that during the start of the season, homeowners should closely examine their sprinkles to make sure the nozzles are working correctly and not grown over, clean out any excess debris and make sure they are pointed in the right direction and rotated properly. And, when it comes to the best time of day, Sherrington strongly encourages that all watering be done before the sun comes up.

“We recommend that homeowners irrigate in the early hours of the morning,” said Sherrington. “Depending on how long it should take, plan the irrigation cycle to finish before the sun rises. If you have a large property and it takes six hours to complete, and the sun comes up at 6:00 a.m., work back and start your cycle at midnight. You want to prevent the plant from going into the night under prolonged leaf wetness. With summer’s high temperatures and high humidity, prolonged leaf wetness encourages disease.”

Pick the Right Plants

Finally, when it comes to shrubs and plants, make sure to do your homework before you buy. Survey your yard. Do your shrubs have a lot of cover from larger trees, a pergola or roof overhang? Would your plants be entirely in the sun?

“The biggest mistake a person can make is choosing the wrong plants,” said Joan Murray, sales manager at [Gethsemane Garden Center in Chicago](#). “They choose plants that are not compatible with the exposure, like putting a shade plant in a sunny area.”

Murray notes to take sun and shade exposure, your area's climate, and the time you have to dedicate to upkeep into consideration when you determine what plants and shrubs to buy.

When it comes to outdoor care, the experts can agree that to set yourself up for success, you should do your research, be realistic about what you are able to accomplish on your own and consult the experts when necessary to avoid a costly mistake later on.