



**PREPPING  
YOUR YARD  
FOR SPRING**



Spring is almost here, and that means you have some work to do if you want to enjoy green grass, lush shrubs and bushes, and healthy trees in the coming months. Soon, the ground will thaw, and new growth will begin. Your grass and all of your plants will come out of hibernation. Buds will bloom, and your whole yard will erupt in the colors of early spring ... if you do a little bit of prep work now.

If you've been less than impressed with your yard in springs past, this guide will walk you through the steps you need to take to make your lawn lush and healthy. We'll also show you what to do for your trees and shrubs, as well as any preparations for garden beds.

## PREPARING YOUR LAWN

First of all, don't jump the gun and get started too early. If there's still snow on the ground, you're not going to do your lawn any favors by mucking it up with a rake while the ground is still thawing. Once you've had your first good thaw, though, it's time to get started.



Over the winter, debris has been collecting on your lawn. The last of the leaves and needles fell from the trees on and around your property. Branches and twigs likely blew into your yard, too.

That means, before you do anything else, it's time to get the rake out. Go over your whole yard. Yard rubbish and debris can get tangled in the root system of your grass and cause problems later on – not to mention, it can get tangled up with your lawn mower and create a real headache. So, rake and bag all of the debris that's collected over the winter, and you'll be on your way to getting things started for the spring.

## LOOK OUT FOR MOLD

If you've had snow sitting on your yard through the winter, you might have some cases of snow mold in lower patches of your lawn. You can usually avoid this situation by mowing your lawn one last time before winter really sets in and by raking the leaves and debris off the lawn before snows arrive.

If you didn't do that, you'll want to keep an eye on those patches. Snow mold tends to go away on its own as temperatures start to rise, and you can usually get rid of it by raking the affected area and adding new seed.

## APPLY SUPPLEMENTAL SEED



Now, take a look around your yard. Check for areas that look thin or patchy. Make a trip to your local garden supply store and pick up a bag of the appropriate seed for your grass and a bag of soil or compost. Mix the soil with the seed, and then take a sturdy rake and break up the ground in the areas where the grass is thin and sparse.

Once you've gotten the ground churned up a bit, spread your seed-soil mix over it. Don't forget to water these areas frequently to encourage growth. In fact, it's probably about time to water the whole lawn.



## WATER YOUR LAWN

At this point, it's time to do your first deep watering of the season on the whole yard. A lot of people make the mistake here of watering, but not watering enough. Remember when you water your lawn, you're training the roots of the grass to grow deep.

When you water often, but not very thoroughly, the water won't seep deeply enough into the soil. With all of the available water sitting right at the surface of the ground, the roots will remain shallow and not grow deep into the soil.

If, on the other hand, you give your lawn plenty of water, but water it less frequently, the water will penetrate deeply into the soil. This will encourage the roots to delve deeper, creating a stronger, healthier lawn.

Don't think of watering your lawn as preventive maintenance. Instead, think of the soil like a sponge: you are filling the soil with moisture and encouraging the roots to grow deep into the ground. This will help prevent over-watering, as well.

## GETTING YOUR MOWER OUT FOR THE SEASON

Once you've raked, seeded, and watered, it is time to get ready to start mowing your lawn. That means you should get your mower out and make sure that it's ready to go.

First, you'll want check the oil level and possibly change the oil according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

You may also want to siphon the fuel tank and start with new gas, as gasoline tends to lose its potency and can go bad over the winter months. You can't go wrong with fresh fuel, though. Be sure to dispose of the old gas properly at a local waste disposal facility, as gasoline is considered hazardous material and needs to be dealt with properly. You may also want to consider adding fuel stabilizer next fall before you put your mower to bed for the winter.



The last step is to sharpen the mower blades. This may seem minor, but it's possibly the most important component to ensuring that your mower is in good working order. Dull mower blades will shred grass and be more likely to rip grass from its roots, rather than cutting the grass cleanly. A dull mower blade will stress the lawn, promoting drought stress, disease and insect damage, and possibly death.



If you don't have the tools at home to sharpen your lawn mower blades, you can have them sharpened professionally at minimal cost. You can also replace the blades on your mower if they are too old and damaged to sharpen. Whatever you do, make sure that you start the season off with sharp mower blades.

With newly sharpened blades and a fresh tank of gas, you'll be ready to start mowing. The first mowing of the season can be at your normal height, or you can choose to lower it a notch. Lowering the blades is not required, but doing so will remove the brown, winter-damaged leaves and let the new green grass blades shine through. Don't set the mower so low that it scalps the soil. After the initial mowing, raise the mower back up. Once it starts to get hot, raising the mower another notch or two will help the grass cope with the heat stress.



Now that you know what to do for your grass, it's time to talk about your trees and how to prepare them for the coming spring.

## **PREPARING YOUR TREES FOR SPRING**

You don't have to do a whole lot to your trees right now to ensure that they'll be gorgeous and full of life come spring. However, if you do two key things – mulching and pruning – you'll be sure to get great results once the weather warms up and your trees start to bloom.





## MULCH

You should keep a layer of mulch around the bases of your trees and shrubs throughout the winter. A 2-4” layer is a great insulator. It will lock in heat during the winter and keep the soil cool in the summer. A mulch layer will also lock in moisture, protecting your trees’ roots from drought stress during the winter and summer months. Mulching is just as important for your shrubs and bushes, as well as your flowerbeds and gardens, as it is for your trees.

If you haven’t already, invest in some high-quality mulch, and lay down a protective layer around your trees and bushes and over dormant flowerbeds and gardens.

If you planted any new trees or shrubs, you will need to feed these plants to maximize their health and growth. Apply some fertilizer before mulching, or better yet, have a professional come and inject the soil around the plant with a fertilizer solution that contains the correct balance of nutrients to stimulate root and shoot growth.



You may also want to add a fertilizer with a nitrogen booster before you lay down your mulch around mature trees. These trees need nitrogen in their soil to continue growing and to maintain their health, and because they've been around for some time, they've leached a lot of the naturally occurring nitrogen out of the ground already. So pay attention to your fertilizer and make sure that your trees have everything they need for the spring.

## PRUNING



Now is the perfect time to prune your trees before spring. Why? Pruning dormant branches results in a huge burst of new growth in the spring. If you want to see more greenery and more blooms as the weather gets warmer, get out the pruning shears now and start cutting away at dormant branches.

Don't be shy about pruning dead and damaged branches.

These will only hang in the way and create eyesores or leach sap and nutrients that the tree could be using for new growth. Pruning away the old growth and dead branches will do a lot for your tree's new, healthy growth in the spring.

Even if you're not concerned with an explosive burst of green leaves come spring, if you have fruit trees, you should absolutely prune them now. If you wait to prune your fruit trees until after they've started to bloom, you'll add undue stress to the tree, resulting in fewer fruits. Another general rule is to wait to prune flowering trees and shrubs until after they have flowered. Pruning these ornamental flowering plants right before they bloom will rob you of the beautiful blooms you so greatly desire.



## **STAKES AND WIRES ON YOUNG TREES**

Now that the winds and snows are dying down, and your young trees have survived their first winter, it's time to give them a little bit more breathing room. Remove the stakes that you've planted to help keep them upright. By this point, they should be stable enough to stand up on their own.

If they aren't quite ready to stand on their own without stakes, be sure to loosen the wires you have around them. Wire left on too long can strangle your young trees before they have a chance to grow.



## YOUR SHRUBS

Much like your trees, you'll want to make sure that you have a good layer of mulch around the bases of your shrubs, and you'll want to prune away dead and dormant branches to make room for new growth in the coming months.

After you've pruned all of your trees and shrubs, be sure to pick up or rake up all of the clippings. You don't want them getting entangled with your grass or creating problems when you're mowing.

While you're at it, get down around the bases of your shrubs and start weeding. In early spring, weeds start popping up and getting their stranglehold on gardens and around bushes and shrubs. The earlier you catch them and uproot them, the more successful you'll be at keeping them out of your yard for the rest of the spring and summer months.

## GARDEN BEDS



If you have garden beds, you have quite a few options for springtime preparations. For example, right now is a great time to plant bulbs like daffodils, crocus, lilies, and hyacinths. Some of these may not bloom this coming spring, and some may even take a year or two to gather all the nutrients they need for strong blooms. However, you'll know that they're there, and you'll have something to look forward to.

If you're planting vegetables, wait until the soil is a little bit dryer and make sure it's had the chance to thoroughly thaw before you start planting early spring vegetables like lettuce, spinach, or leeks. You'll want to make sure that the soil is workable and that it won't be too easily compacted, which will smother your seeds and deprive them of the oxygen they need to grow.

Otherwise, it's a good time to make sure that your gardens are all well insulated for any last hard freezes before spring officially begins. Make sure to get rid of any debris in your garden beds, as you did in the rest of the yard.

Now you have all the basics to get your lawn ready for spring, and your garden, too! Follow these tips, and you'll have a beautiful, lush, and green yard, with healthy trees and shrubs throughout the warm months and into fall.

For more information on keeping your yard lush and healthy, contact Ryan Lawn & Tree at **855-216-2293** or visit us at [www.ryanlawn.com](http://www.ryanlawn.com).

