

LANDSCAPE TIPS FOR MAY

Once the ground has warmed-up, determine if you need to top-dress your beds with shredded hardwood mulch. Around shrubs and trees, the mulch should be 3-4" thick in exposed areas. Be careful not to pile larger amounts of mulch against tree trunks and shrub stems, which could cause problems for the plant. In perennial areas, mulch should be 1-2" in depth. Once again, do not over apply in perennial areas as rot could increase. Some perennials, such as Autumn Joy Sedum, like it hot and dry and should have almost no hardwood mulch around it. One yard of mulch covers roughly 100ft² at 1-2" in depth. Two cubic yards will fill the bed of a normal 1/2 ton pickup truck. .



Fertilize trees and shrubs as needed. While fertilizing is not always needed, sometimes you may want to encourage more growth or increase health. An application of a slow release fertilizer, such as Nutri-Pak 19-6-8 is best for slow sustained growth.



Apply granular sulphur around acid soil-requiring plants such as rhododendrons, azaleas, hollies and vernal witchhazels. These plants benefit from having sulphur sprinkled around their root zone because moisture works with the sulphur to acidify the soil in spring. Sulphur needs to be reapplied annually for optimal growth. For larger trees such as river birch, oaks or red maples, it is better to contact an arborist for treatment if they have shown yellowing of leaves in the past.

If you wish to keep your mugo pine small or dwarf in habit, this is the only time to prune it. As the new growth emerges, it is referred to as the "candle stage" due to the new terminal growth before the needles fully expand that resemble candles. Simply snap-off a portion of the new "candle" with your fingers before it fully expands. Since that is the only growing point of the pine, do not snap-off the entire candle. Only 2/3's of the candle should be removed. Candle pinching keeps the pine smaller and promotes lateral bud formation, resulting in a denser plant next year.



Inspect plants for early signs of insect damage, weeds and diseases. One to particularly look for at this time is the European Pine Sawfly. They feed on the last year's needles of two-needled pines (Red, Scots, Mugo, and occasionally Austrian). These caterpillar-like larvae are one of the easiest to control. Small numbers can be picked off by hand or dislodged with a forceful stream of water from a hose. Larger numbers can be sprayed with an insecticidal soap or other chemicals. Please consult labels whenever applying any chemicals.

Lilac blooms may be cut and brought into the home. Using scissor-type hand pruners cut off a portion of the woody stem below the flowers. Bring inside and use a hammer to slightly smash the end of the stem to help it better take up water in a vase.

