

# SPRING

## LAWN & GARDEN

May 2012



- Planting a Small Herb Garden
- Word on the Street: If Money Grew on Trees
- Adding a Personal Touch to Outdoor Spaces

A Special Supplement to the  
***Winchester Press***

**PLUS: Advertising and special offers from local lawn and garden experts**



# Design your back yard to suit your lifestyle

A properly landscaped yard can make all the difference in how you enjoy your property. Home Hardware's gardening expert Mark Cullen says that taking time to plan your outdoor space carefully will ensure that it is functional and meets your needs.

"Your yard should be pleasing to the eye and be a place where you want to spend your free time," says Cullen. He recommends that homeowners should take several things into consideration when planning their landscaping projects.

"The most important thing is to look at the entire property and know what you want to accomplish. If you enjoy entertaining, make sure to reserve a space where you can host friends and neighbours," Cullen says.

A backyard deck or patio provides a great space to enjoy all of the hard work you put into your lawn and garden. Pressure-treated wood, cedar, and even interlocking stone can give your entertaining space a beautiful foundation, but also consider some unique lighting and decoration options to improve function.



Are you looking to set the mood for your summer evenings? Consider installing solar lighting, a garden fountain, or a designer fire pit to create the perfect setting for your evening barbecue.

If you enjoy large, robust gardens, Cullen says you

should minimize the space used for a deck or patio and consider what garden features will enhance the enjoyment of your space, such as specialty gardens for cut flowers, herbs, or vegetables. If you have children, a large lawn or play area may be a priority. No matter the final design, consider including a few focal points such as a water feature, trellis, bird house, or planters to add character. You may not be able to include everything, but a wish list is a vital first step in garden planning.

If you have little time to spend gardening, choose low maintenance, slower-growing plants. If you love to garden and intend to spend your leisure hours tending your landscape, you have a wider variety in terms of design and landscape plants from which to choose.

Cullen says the most important thing is to have fun. "Your yard is where you want to go to relax, so taking a little time to plan out your design will make the job go smoother and be an enjoyable experience."

More expert gardening advice and product information is available at [www.homehardware.ca](http://www.homehardware.ca). — *News Canada*

## Surviving drought during a water restriction

In response to drought, many communities institute water restrictions that limit how much water a homeowner can use to water his or her lawn. There are a few steps homeowners can take to help their lawn survive drought during a water restriction.

### Extend intervals between cuts

Mowing the lawn is necessary, but whenever a lawn is mowed the grass is stressed. Since grass is already stressed during a drought, try to extend the periods between cuts as long as possible.

### Help the lawn help itself

A lawn can actually help shield itself from drought, especially if homeowners are on board. When mowing, raise the decks of the mower so the grass can adequately shade itself from the blistering summer sun. Raising the decks also allows the lawn to retain more water, which will be lost to evaporation if the lawn is cut too short.



### Aerate

The height of drought season is not necessarily the best time to aerate, so the correct aeration schedule might be a preventative measure homeowners can take to help their lawn better cope with drought.

Bluegrass, bent grass, fescues, and rye grasses grow best when temperatures are between 60 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit and might struggle mightily when the weather is especially hot and dry. August through early October is the best time to aerate cool season lawns.

So why aerate? Because aerating the lawn helps break up hard, compacted soil, allowing water, air and nutrients, each of which are essential to a healthy lawn, to reach the soil and strengthen the roots. Strong roots are essential for the lawn to survive, be it hot and dry temperatures in the summer or colder weather in the winter.

### Buy a mulching mower

If you don't already have one, purchase a mulching mower and employ the mulching feature during hot and dry periods. Remove the bag from your mower so the clippings are left on the lawn, where they will break down and provide the lawn nutrients it desperately needs.

Droughts are typically a lawn enthusiast's worst nightmare. But even if water restrictions have been put in place, employing a few simple strategies can help a lawn survive extended periods of high temperatures and dry conditions.

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# Small herb garden — big health benefits

Not everyone has a green thumb or the room needed for a floral showcase. Here's a quick and practical fix — an herb garden. All an herb garden needs is a little patch of real estate, some soil, and good sun. It will reward you with beauty, variegated foliage and flowers, minimal work (many herbs are hardy and perennial), and big health benefits. Make your selection from these or other herbs based on their uses and health benefits:



## The Lighthearted Vegetarian

by Janice Atkey Videto

**Basil:** No Italian dish should be without basil. Chop fresh leaves onto your salads. Add them to sandwiches. Great for flavouring oils and salad dressings.

**Chives:** A favourite, chopped fresh on baked potatoes, veggies, and salads. Beautiful, round flowers appear all summer long.

**Lemon Thyme:** Plant near your patio to repel mosquitoes. Lovely fragrance, leaves can be used in your bath water.

**Lavender:** Use it dried for sachets (scent helps soothe fussy babies and adults alike). Place fresh leaves in bath water to soothe headaches, colds, and coughs. Use lavender oil for burns and stings.

**Mint:** A favourite in Thai and Asian cooking. Adds a refreshing note to salads, soups, and sandwiches. Steep it into a tea as a sure cure for indigestion.

**Parsley:** Long relegated to a discarded bit of decoration, parsley is actually a powerhouse! Chew it as a breath freshener. Parsley is very beneficial to our kidneys, minimizing inflammation and acting as a natural mild diuretic. Chop a handful and pack onto skin bruises and infections to speed healing.

**Sage:** Steep into a strong gargle for sore throats. An excellent addition to rich dishes with pork, beans, or cheese.

**Thyme:** Steeped into a tea, it aids digestion and, cooled, is an excellent facial rinse for blemishes.

### Until next time...

Start planning your small real estate, big health benefits herb garden today. Get adventurous, and introduce more herbs into your cooking!



### Vegilicious recipe du jour

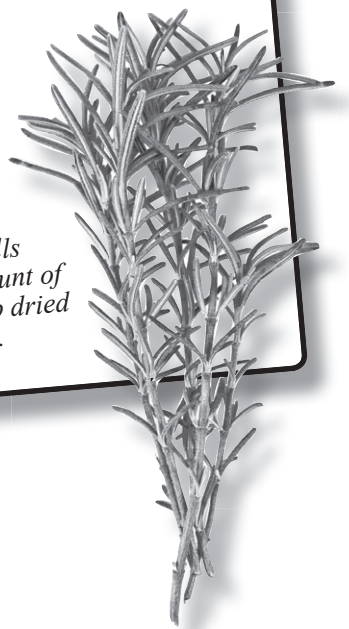
#### Herbed salad oils

Stuff ½ cup of fresh herb leaves into a glass jar. Pour 2 cups extra virgin olive oil overtop, seal tightly and store in a dark, cool place for about two weeks. Taste the oil. When you feel the flavour is strong enough, strain the herbs out and add 1 part vinegar to 3 parts oil; store in the fridge. You now have a fancy speciality oil that you might find in a gourmet shop! Use herbs such as tarragon, basil, rosemary, coriander, and sage; add peppercorns, garlic cloves, anise, or lemon zest to vary the flavours.

#### Herbed salad vinegars

Use the exact same method as for the oils, except stand the glass jar in a warm, sunny location for about two weeks. Taste the vinegar. When you feel the flavour is strong enough, strain the herbs out and store the herbed vinegar in the fridge. The best herbs for vinegar infusions are basil, tarragon, chives, dill, and lemon thyme.

**Tip:** Fresh herbs can be used in any recipe that calls for dried herbs. Just use approximately ⅓ the amount of fresh herbs. For example, if a recipe calls for 1 tsp dried rosemary, you can substitute ⅓ tsp fresh rosemary.



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# Go green in your garden

Gardening can be a rewarding and relaxing hobby, one that allows gardeners to escape from the daily grind and soak up some sun. As rewarding as gardening can be, it's even more so when gardeners ply their trade in an eco-friendly way.

Gardening with the environment in mind is something many gardeners might do already without even knowing it. The following are a few ways to garden in a way that's mutually beneficial to gardeners and the environment.

• **Use mulch to conserve resources and reduce reliance on fertilizers.** Conserving resources is one of the best ways to help the environment, and applying mulch is a great way to conserve water. Mulch helps the soil retain water, keeping the water from evaporating into the air, which means less watering for gardeners who want to keep their gardens looking lush and healthy.

In addition to helping conserve water, mulch can also help reduce reliance on fertilizers. That's because mulch provides nutrients to the soil as it breaks down, providing an eco-friendly alternative for gardeners who don't want to rely on fertilizers to deliver nutrients to their soil.

• **Plant more flowers.** Planting flowers is another eco-friendly way to garden. Native flowers, in particular, can help maintain an area's natural ecosystem, providing food and shelter for insects and other wildlife.

More flowers and plants around the property also means there will be significantly less grass to mow, which reduces the amount of gas necessary to mow that grass in the warmer weather and the amount of greenhouse gases the lawn mower produces. In addition, less grass means less need for fertilizers and pesticides to maintain that grass.

• **Choose gardening tools and products with the environment**

**in mind.** Veteran gardeners have a host of tools that help tackle every problem imaginable. But many older tools or gardening products might not be made of recycled materials. When shopping for gardening tools, whether you're a beginner who needs everything or a veteran gardener whose tools have seen better days, choose products made from recycled materials. For example, many gardeners use mats to help reduce stress on their knees when kneeling down to garden. When buying a new mat, choose one made from recycled tires.

But emphasizing recycled products shouldn't stop at the tool shed. Mulch, for instance, can be made from recycled rubber and won't impact the environment in a negative way. Just be sure to purchase recycled mulch that is nontoxic and does not consume natural resources.

• **Live and let live.** Insects might be a nuisance, but they can also be a gardener's best friend. Spraying insecticide simply



Planting more plants and flowers around the property is one way gardeners can garden in a more eco-friendly way.

because insects can be pesky is shortsighted and impractical. Certain spiders prey on other insects that can be harmful to a garden, while butterflies and bees help pollinate flowers. Earthworms are also very beneficial to a garden, helping

to aerate and fertilize the soil and enabling plants to grow by removing harmful matter from the soil.

Gardening is a rewarding hobby, one that is even more so when gardeners institute eco-friendly practices.

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# If money grew on trees...

by Amanda Smith-Millar  
and Matthew Uhrig

## Word on the Street

### QUESTION

*"If you won the lottery tomorrow and became fabulously wealthy, would you do your own gardening or pay an expert to do it? Why?"*

### RESPONSES

"I would certainly hire the gardener. My green thumb achieves wonderful houseplants and flowers. The flowerbeds, however, look dismal, so I doubt I will live long enough to achieve the desired results outdoors on my own."

**Clara Edwardson, Winchester**

"If I won the lottery tomorrow, I would still do all my gardening, as I love to garden. It is great exercise and relaxation, as I can go out to the garden and think of nothing. I have small hands to help from my two grandsons, and they can't wait to pick the raspberries and peas."

**Helen Porteous, Vernon**

"I would do my own gardening, but I would build a greenhouse/solarium, attached to my house, as well as a little outdoor garden beside it. Both would be small, since I don't like doing a ton of gardening. But I like doing some here and there; the smell of fresh vegetables and fruit (especially tomatoes, which could be either!). And I love the idea of drinking tea and eating tasty, homegrown produce, looking at my greenery, and enjoying the sun."

**Sheree Bradford-Lea, Winchester Press editorial cartoonist, Ottawa**

"I would still do my own gardening, without a doubt. I do it not for work, but because I enjoy it, and it's a very relaxing and fulfilling pastime for me. I love watching the garden grow. The best part is eating the veggies when they are ripe for picking, and watching my sunflowers grow from an inch to 12 feet plus. I would most definitely have a bigger garden, though."

**Tran Whitney, Chesterville**

"I would continue to do my own gardening because I enjoy the aspect of planning a garden and growing flowers. The idea of working the soil and getting your hands dirty is very relaxing to me. It also keeps me in contact with my heritage, as my grandmother was a great gardener, and, in fact, was the founding member of the Manotick Horticultural Society. Some of my flowers and shrubs have come from the home place in Manotick; therefore, the idea of carrying on this heritage is very satisfying."

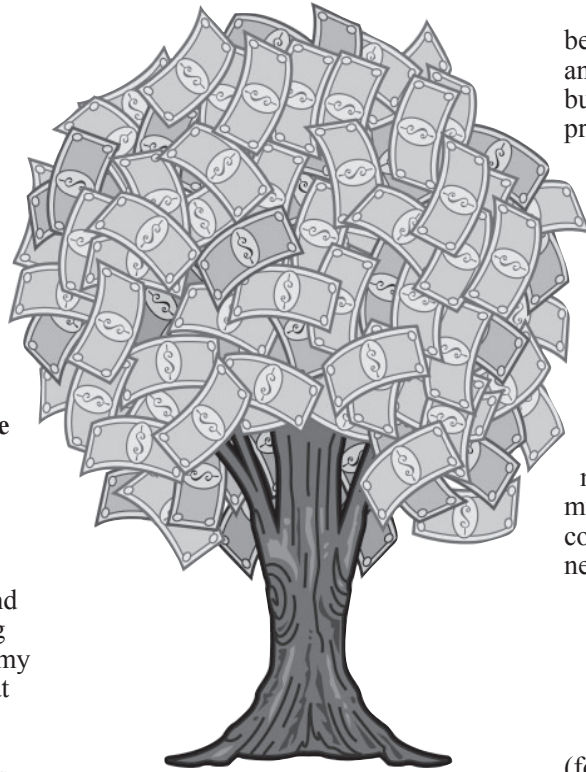
**Tom Clapp, Winchester**

"I would hire an expert to do it... then he would also have to look after it while I would be away travelling the world and spending my money."

**Gerry Boyce, deputy-mayor, Township of North Dundas, South Mountain**

"I would definitely do my own gardening... Well, truth be told, it is my wife who does the gardening, but I would definitely provide her with monetary support to do the work."

**Phil Labossiere, South Mountain**



"I love planting and growing my own fruits and vegetables with the assistance of my daughters. It's a great learning experience, and helps them in making healthy food choices. We would do this regardless of any lottery winnings; however, I would leave the lawn maintenance to the experts."

**Martha Link-Horvath, Winchester**

"If I won and was filthy rich, I'd mainly do it myself because I love to be out working in the flowerbeds. Odds are, I would even expand the beds because if I won enough, I might semi-retire. I'd also likely spend more time at the local museum helping with their new heritage garden."

**Kim Sheldrick, Vernon**

"If I won the lottery tomorrow and became fabulously wealthy, I would pay an expert gardener to manage my gardens, but I would definitely still putter and probably interfere too much! There is nothing like a nice, warm, sunny day spent outside in a blooming garden, but it would be wonderful to not have to worry about the weeding, and spend a lot more time enjoying!"

**Marieke van Noppen-Mulligan, Winchester**

"I doubt that I would hire a gardening expert because my two neighbours have been helping to keep my flowerbeds looking so good. How could I rob them of that joy? What kind of neighbour would I be?"

**Troy Cross, Winchester executive director, Winchester District Memorial Hospital**

"I would have someone do some things (for example watering the flowers) but I would also do some work myself. I like the idea of being outside and doing my own, but time doesn't always allow it. I enjoy planting flowers, but then I never do much after that."

**Hollie Clayton, the Academy of Dance and Fitness, Winchester**

"Currently my wife, Frances, is the expert gardener in the family. She is the brain, and I am the brawn. She chooses and designs all our flower gardens, and I do the heavy lifting like the tilling and spreading the mulch, etc. I doubt that anything would change if we won a lot of money, as we both love working together around the yard."

**Guy Lauzon, MP for Stormont, Dundas, and South Glengarry, St. Andrew's**

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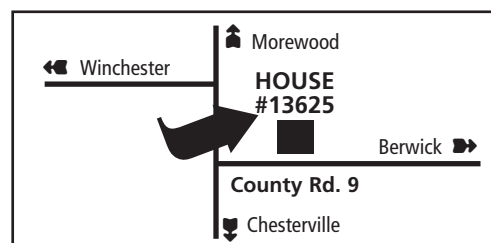
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### Cotnam business rechristened

Cotnam Country Depot has undergone a name change this season. The Chesterville business is now affiliated with RONA, and is called Tru Country & Garden. Besides gardening and barbecue materials, the store sells lawn furniture, wood pellets, general hardware, propane refills, animal health and nutrition products, screen replacements, bulk chlorine, work wear, and more "for all those little things you need," as the store's slogan says. Pictured at work is manager Terry McElroy.

Press Photo — Smith-Millar

## Large weed infestations can now be controlled

If a weed-free lawn is important for your family enjoyment throughout the summer, you may be looking for some serious help now that most Canadian municipalities uphold pesticide bans.

Indeed if you've already been looking for help but the weed-infested areas are just getting worse, it looks like a highly effective "broadcast" product is in the shops this year.

"One of the most exciting innovations is a weed-control product that is made with iron," says Natalie Jones at Scotts Canada, a leading name in lawn care. "It was introduced last year under the name EcoSense Weed B Gon — and now it's also available in a concentrate format designed for large areas of a weed-

infested lawn. The product is ingeniously formulated to kill weeds but not the lawn.

Once applied, it penetrates into the cell structure of the plant to kill it from the inside out."

If you have a lot of weeds throughout your lawn, Jones advises to simply attach the ready-to-spray product on the end of your hose, or mix the concentrate format according to instructions. Then spray across all weed-infested areas.

"With a concentrated formula like this, you can see a difference in just a few hours as the weeds turn black, shrivel up and die. It's a welcomed, effective solution; it's available in communities with pesticide bans — and in tandem with science, it works to kill weeds without harming your lawn." — *News Canada*



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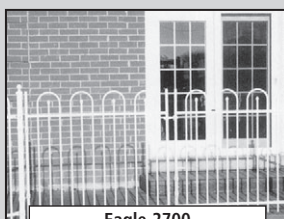
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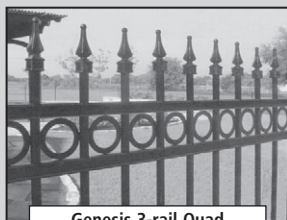
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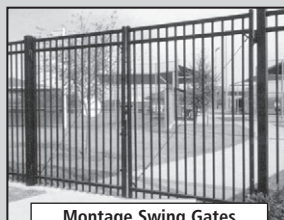
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## Gardening tips

## Plants need food, too

Farmers tell us it's true. Flowers, vegetables and fruit must be fed to thrive.

Indeed, throughout the growing season, most plants tend to use up the nutrients in the soil at a rate faster than those elements can be replaced naturally. So in our own gardens, applying plant food to the soil is a step recommended to ensure optimal nourishment. It's an important step, experts say, and yet perhaps due to the effort required, feeding is often forgotten.

"Veggie gardens are especially heavy feeders and in addition to essential nutrients like nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus, our plants also need sufficient calcium," says Syd Pell at Miracle-Gro, a leader in this field.

Pell explains that calcium serves two purposes. First, it assists in the plant's uptake of other nutrients from the soil. As well, a calcium deficiency can result in disorders like blossom end rot and cracking in tomatoes and peppers; discoloured leaves on beans and cabbage; forked roots in beets, and bitter pit on apples.

"This year in the Miracle-Gro line, take

a look at our new and easy Shake 'n Feed," he continued. "It's a food that contains all the right minerals and better still, there's no mixing and no mess. Just shake it on and it will feed your tomatoes, fruit plants and vegetable patch all season long, giving them exactly what they need to thrive."

**Slow-release spells freedom**

Most gardeners already know that feeding the soil is important, Pell points out, but many don't get around to doing it on a timely basis, as they are either too busy or they forget.

"Time-strapped gardeners tell us that it can be a challenge to remember to feed at the proper times and that's why the slow-release formula of Shake 'n Feed has made it such a popular food. Gardeners love that they can just shake it — and in less than five minutes they are done feeding their plants for the entire season."

More information on this topic is online at [www.GroForGood.ca](http://www.GroForGood.ca) — and this spring, the *Miracle-Gro Gardening Guide* will be distributed in neighbourhood garden centres.

— News Canada

**Lawn-care lovers**

At Allan Johnston Repair and Sales in Metcalfe, the snowmobiles have been put aside, and the summer season's lawn care equipment products have made their way into the showroom. Included in the mix are a number of items that will help to keep lawns pristine all season long, including a range of riding mowers. Pictured is store employee Tyler Benson.

Press Photo — Uhrig



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*Use caution and common sense*

## Be aware of hazards

Gardening is often described as a relaxing and beneficial hobby regardless of a person's age. While time outdoors in the garden can prove calming and enjoyable, there is a dark side to gardening as well: Namely the injuries that may result from various activities.

### Hand injuries

Cuts and even finger amputations may result from unfamiliarity with pruning tools, such as hedge clippers or handheld pruners. The design of these tools is so they'll be able to cut through small to moderately sized branches, which means it would not be too difficult for a pruner to snap through a finger bone. Injuries with these tools often occur when the gardener is distracted or the tool slips during use.

Pruners may also exacerbate conditions of carpal tunnel syndrome, usually caused by repetitive hand movements, such as typing or repetitious work. Prolonged, repetitive motions, such as weeding or pruning, can cause skin, tendon or nerve irritation. Rotate tasks every 15 minutes to give certain areas of the body a break.

The use of battery-powered and ergonomically designed hand tools can alleviate pain and may prevent some injuries. Power tools require less effort for cutting, which may reduce tool slippage or misuse.

### Bites and bruises

Infection is another injury that people may not associate with gardening. Gardeners often come in contact with many different types of organic matter when gardening. Bacteria, fungi, and insects, as well as chemical fertilizers and pesticides, may be found in soil. Failing to protect hands, especially those with a small abrasion or cut in the skin, enables these substances to potentially enter the

body and bloodstream, and infections or rashes may result.

Contact with poisonous insects is another concern. Some ants have irritating bites. There are many types of spiders that can be poisonous or inflict a painful bite. Scorpions in dry climates can sting when uncovered in burrows.

Wearing gloves, particularly leather ones, can offer protection against thorny objects, insect bites, chemicals, and other skin irritants found in the soil.

### Sun damage

Spending time outdoors subjects a person to UV exposure each and every time. Gardening unprotected can mean a bad case of sunburn and the potential to develop skin cancer at a later time.

Whenever spending time outdoors pruning or just admiring the landscape, gardeners should apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen and wear a wide-brimmed hat. Try to do the majority of yard work in the early morning or early evening when the sun's rays are the least harmful.

### Additional injuries

Many gardeners fail to ease back into garden activities after the winter respite. Should a gardener dive right into strenuous gardening tasks, injuries may ensue. Many hospitals see an influx of back-related injuries, heart attacks, muscle strains, and lacerations come the first stretch of warm weather.

Just like an athlete wouldn't start the new season off right in a professional game, so shouldn't a gardener start strenuous activities without gradually warming up to them.

Gardening can be quite an enjoyable activity but not if a person is sidelined by an injury. Use caution and common sense whenever landscaping.



### Diligent diggers

Lawn maintenance is top of mind for many homeowners, as a task here and there can improve aesthetic appeal. At Dan R Winchester, employee Nick Coleman said mini-tractors, with attached excavators, are available to purchase for those green thumbs looking to expand the scope of projects at home.

Press Photo — Uhrig



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# Wood patio furniture provides value and durability

**W**ood patio furniture can be a decorative and functional addition to outdoor living. The longevity of the furniture and the upkeep required will depend heavily on the type of wood used in construction. Choosing the right wood based on use and budget can help consumers get more for their money.

Although it seems a simple purchase, when faced with the multitude of woods and designs available, shoppers can be easily confused. Learning about the different species of wood commonly used in furniture crafting can make determining why one table is \$1,000 and the other is double the price.

**Pine:** Pine is a household name and a common component of many building products and furniture. Pine's popularity could stem from its availability and affordability. The fact that it is often harvested locally helps keep prices down. Pine as an untreated wood is susceptible to rot and may not be as durable as other woods. Very often pine is pressure-treated to improve its durability and performance. The light colour of pine enables it to be stained or painted in a variety of shades.

**Teak:** Another familiar type of wood, teak is resilient, dense and straight-grained, making it a very stable choice for outdoor furniture. Without preservative, teak will weather to a gray colour and still remain highly resistant to decay — even up to 50 years. Thanks to that durability, teak is typically among the more expensive options.

**Cedar:** Cedar is a rapidly renewable resource thanks to it being a quick grower. That can make cedar an attractive choice to those who are interested in going green with their patio furniture choices. Another advantage to cedar is its resistance to weather and insects. Cedar satchels are often used in closets to keep moths and other bugs away.

**Redwood:** Another softwood, redwood is also harvested domestically from the Pacific Northwest, British Columbia and California. Although it is highly resistant

to rot and termites, it will need to be protected annually with an oil-based stain, sealer and preserver.

**Roble:** A wood native to South America, roble is a dense, strong and lightweight wood. Darker shades of the wood are more resistant to decay. A preservative oil should be used every six months to maintain its beauty.

**Jarrah:** Another exotic-sounding wood, jarrah is harvested mostly from government-managed forests in Australia. While

this wood is naturally resistant to insects and rot, it is also fire-resistant, making it a safe option. It, too, is one of the more durable woods, lasting up to 50 years even without oiling or staining. It is one of the pricier options in outdoor furniture thanks to these properties.

**Cypress:** This is a popular wood for wood garden furniture because it resists decay and cracking very well. Cypress

has a distinctive yellowish-red colour that many people find attractive, but it can also be painted if desired.

**Brazilian Cherry:** Many people may think of this wood only for kitchen cabinet applications, but Brazilian cherry is dense and naturally weather-resistant. This makes it a fine choice for garden furniture. It is also used in playground equipment and decking.

**Alder:** Alder is a hard wood that is valued for its strength and durability and is related to the birch family. It is appreciated for its honey-hued tone and beauty.

**Balau:** Balau is a very dense wood that is tightly grained and rich in tropical oils and resins. It has been used for shipbuilding, heavy-duty furniture and heavy construction, and coveted for its excellent strength and weather-resistant qualities. It is very strong and heavy, making it one of the sought-after choices in outdoor wood furniture materials, driving up the price.

Although many types of wood patio furniture can be kept outdoors and remain durable, it's recommended that homeowners cover or take in wood furniture when the season ends.



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# Tips when creating an outdoor living space

Outdoor living spaces have become increasingly popular over the last several years. The home improvement boom has shown many homeowners just how easy it can be to transform a home into a private sanctuary that caters to the personalities of the home's residents.

Outdoor living areas have become an extension of the home's interior, with many homeowners creating outdoor living rooms and dining areas so they can relax and eat meals outside just as they do indoors. But homeowners thinking of creating outdoor living spaces should consider a few tricks of the trade before beginning their projects.

## Strategically place the space

Property often dictates where the outdoor living space will go, but it helps to keep in mind that the outdoor space is more likely to be used if it's easily accessible from the inside of the home. For instance, if residents need to walk out the front door to access an outdoor living space in the back yard, then residents might find the area is too inconveniently located, and they won't make the most of the space. Whenever possible, plan the outdoor living space so it's easily accessible from the home's interior, preferably from the kitchen so it will

be easier to carry meals outdoors when dining outside.

## Emphasize comfort

Many homeowners look at their outdoor living areas as places to kick their feet up and relax, so comfort should take precedence when planning the space. Forgo the plastic patio chairs of yesteryear for furniture that's more sturdy and roomy so you won't feel cramped or sweaty on warm summer evenings and afternoons. In addition, don't forget to shade the area. Some homeowners choose to build pergolas, but oftentimes an umbrella or two can do the trick at a fraction of the cost. If the outdoor living area is near trees, they might provide sufficient shade



from the often-blistering summer sun. But keep a few umbrellas in the garage just in case.

## Illuminate the area

Summer nights spent relaxing in the outdoor living area make for great memories. But such nights are nearly impossible if the area doesn't have some lighting. Tiki torches might do the trick for some, while others who want to avoid giving their outdoor area a luau feel might prefer solar-powered accent lights, which won't require any wiring. If your back yard

attracts its fair share of insects, look for insect-repelling lights or lamps. Whatever your preference, don't forget to have some lighting so those summer evenings spent

under the sky don't have to end when the sun goes down.

## Keep the design consistent

In addition to providing an outdoor respite from the daily grind, an outdoor living space can also increase a home's resale value. However, homeowners who have one eye on R&R and the other on resale value should keep the design of their outdoor living space consistent with their home. One of the goals when designing an outdoor living space should be to create a seamless transition from the home's interior to its exterior. The best way to do that is to keep the designs of both living spaces consistent.

## Don't forget the fire pit

A fire pit provides a great focal point for an outdoor living area. Instead of sitting at the dinner table, families and friends can gather around the fire pit and relax with some s'mores and share stories. But even when guests aren't coming over, a fire pit makes for a great place to relax and let the time go by.

With more and more homeowners transforming their homes into their own sanctuaries, outdoor living spaces continue to grow in popularity. By considering these guidelines, homeowners can create the outdoor areas of their dreams.

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## Garden hardware nurtures distinctive style

## Globes, ironwork add personal touch to outdoor space

WINCHESTER — While plants, flowers, and greenery remain the focus of most gardens, it's easy to lose sight of factors that can make a major impact on your outdoor environment: artistic and decorative hardware.

Trish Boje of BMR has carefully hand-picked the garden-friendly merchandise available at the Winchester store. With "primitive" (also known as "rustic") style remaining the central theme

of the majority of the pieces sold, she aims to offer customers a tasteful selection from which they can craft their personalized gardens.

Along with BMR gardening expert Fay Gallinger, the ladies do their best to help local green thumbs connect with products that will truly give gardens a personal touch.

"I tend to gravitate to what I like in colour," explained Gallinger. She's particularly fond of the large globes — often made of glass — offered at BMR. For those of us who place an emphasis on colour co-ordination, hardware is just as important as flowers. That's why

someone with, for example, a white-and-pink theme in their garden may choose a rose-hued globe to bring a "punch" of colour, shape, and shine.

"You can colour co-ordinate," said Gallinger.

Other popular products include animal ornaments, and some species appear to be more popular than others. Frogs come in a variety of colours and are always the biggest sellers, followed by turtles, said Boje. Butterfly and dragonfly ornaments are the next most-sought-after garden decor. Owls are popular, too: "We've always sold a lot of owls," Boje remarked, adding that she expects these wise-looking birds will be featured on all sorts of merchandise in the industry this season.

Regardless of what you use to decorate your garden space, it's important to take care of your products. A little bit of TLC can go a long way in prolonging the life

## Signature style

Trish Boje (left), co-owner of Winchester BMR, spends considerable time and effort ensuring the decorative hardware pieces available at the shop remain distinct, unique, and elegant. According to BMR gardening expert Fay Gallinger (right), a tastefully chosen hardware ornament can add a touch of personality to anyone's outdoor environment.

Press Photos — Smith-Millar



of lawn ornaments, Boje confirmed: "We recommend that people clear-coat them. They won't fade as quickly; they won't rust as quickly."

When asked which item is the most popular with customers due to its versatility, Boje pointed towards Reallite candles — battery-operated, genuine wax candles that look like the "real thing," casting a gentle glow without being a fire hazard.

Solar lights, which add dashes of soothing colour to a garden at night, are also a hit with local customers.

"They're not glaring," remarked Boje.

"They're decorative, as well as energy efficient," Gallinger added.

There are all sorts of weather-resistant clocks that can both dress up a green space and prevent daydream-prone gardeners from inadvertently allowing hours to pass by as they toil away in the sunshine. Large or small, classic or modern, featuring standard numbers or Roman numerals, time pieces are popular with gardeners

who despise "running in the house with soiled boots to see what time it is," said Gallinger wryly.

Is it possible to go "overboard" with lawn and garden decorations?

Yes, said Boje — but it's unlikely to occur.

"I mean, you'd have to have a pretty large budget to go overboard," Boje speculated. But she noted that quality lawn ornaments, like any pieces, don't need to be expensive.

Whenever possible, Boje tries to source products from Canadian distributors and "buy Canadian."

Boje pointed out that people's back yards are becoming an increasingly popular place in which to spend time at home during warm-weather months. That trend may partially explain why gardeners appear to be increasingly interested in creating a comfortable, cozy environment among the flora and fauna at home.

"The 'outdoors' is becoming a living space," Boje observed.

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# Setting up a backyard play set

Outdoor play is a highlight of childhood. Being able to run, jump and swing outside is an excellent form of exercise and a way for kids to interact with their friends.

One staple of youthful play is spending time on a play set in the back yard. Parents without a play set in the back yard need only look into a neighbouring yard with a play set to witness these prime congregation spots for the neighbourhood children. And play sets don't just benefit kids. Parents who want to keep tabs on their children can do so much more easily with a backyard play set, and knowing they are having fun close by alleviates worries.

The decision to purchase a play set is one pondered by parents all across the country. There are scores of ready-made varieties available or sets that can be custom designed. The choice of which one to buy should be based on a number of factors, both in desired features and also models that offer safety.

## Materials

The first decision parents face is which material to use for the play set. The main materials used to build play sets are plastic, metal and wood. Plastic sets tend to be very basic and may be reserved for young children's sets. While they can go outside, they may not last more than a few years and are often best relegated to indoor toys.

Metal sets are some of the most durable and strong. They are frequently seen at parks and playgrounds. Metal play sets are often cemented down to a foundation for stability, which doesn't make them ideal for a temporary set that will be removed when the kids outgrow it. Also, you cannot generally add onto a metal set.

Wooden sets are usually a compromise between the two. They're good for back yards because they can be taken down when they're no longer used. They can also be made more useful with add-on attachments, such as extra slides, rock

walls and different swing variations.

## Safety

Play sets are designed for children, so all of them should be safe, right? Not exactly. Some manufacturers cut corners or create somewhat questionable designs. Look for recessed hardware and bolts so that clothing doesn't snag on pieces that stick out.

Choose play sets that have handles for extra stability while children are climbing. Avoid ones with metal hardware that can rust and weaken over time. Wood-to-wood attachments won't rust and will be more durable.

When choosing wood sets, be sure to select hardwoods that will not soften and warp. In addition, choose designs that feature rounded edges so there will be less chance for splinters or injuries from hitting blunt edges.

Be sure to have plastic-covered chains on swings and other moveable parts so



that fingers cannot get inside of the links and be pinched.

Check to make sure treated and stained wood does not contain harmful material, like arsenic, that can leach out of the wood into the surrounding soil.

Some parents also may want to look for a wooden play set that is made from materials harvested following sustainable forestry guidelines. This gives parents some peace of mind knowing their child's play set is eco-friendly.

Play sets can be fun additions to the back yard. They come in many different sizes and configurations, so it's possible to find one that will fit in any back yard.

## Things to consider before adding a greenhouse

Many people with a passion for gardening hope to one day have a greenhouse they can call their own. Though greenhouses are a great place for gardeners to hone their crafts, they can also be quite expensive, and there are some things gardeners should consider before building a greenhouse.

• **Size:** A greenhouse can be grandiose or small in stature. The size of a greenhouse depends on the gardener and the amount of property available. Larger greenhouses can be breathtaking, but the homeowner in you might not want a greenhouse to dominate your entire property. In addition, if your planting plans are relatively modest, a bigger greenhouse probably doesn't make much sense.



• **Cost:** Greenhouses can range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars. Price should not dictate which greenhouse you buy, so if you want a large one but can only afford a small one, then it might be best to keep saving money until you can afford one that meets your needs.

• **Use:** If you plan to use the greenhouse just during the standard gardening seasons, then you won't need to heat it. However, most greenhouse owners want to use the greenhouse year-round, in which case you will need to heat the interior. In addition, those who want to keep gardening during the dog days of summer will have to ventilate the greenhouse. Consider the use and the potential cost of a year-round greenhouse before making your decision.

• **Location:** The greenhouse will need to be in a place on the property that gets lots of sun. Before buying or building a greenhouse, choose an area on the property where plants will thrive. If that area is currently used for something else, ask yourself and those who share the home with you if converting that part of the property to a greenhouse is something they can all live with. You don't want the greenhouse to be a burden or negatively impact your family's quality of life.

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# How to prevent lawn damage

Many homeowners aspire to have a pristine and lush lawn. For some, a nice lawn gives them feelings of pride. Others believe a perfect lawn enables them to have the best-looking house in the neighbourhood. Many homeowners spend hours outdoors perfecting their lawns or spend a good deal of money hiring professionals to make their lawn more appealing. But just because a lawn looks good now doesn't mean it will look good later. That's because delicate grass can be damaged by a number of different factors.

## Grubs

Grubs are not very lawn-friendly. Grubs are actually the larval stage of different types of large beetles. These worm-like creatures feed on the roots of grass and are able to kill large sections of the lawn in a relatively short amount of time. It can sometimes be difficult to discern whether grubs, drought or another pest has damaged a lawn. One way to check is to grab a portion of the damaged lawn and attempt to peel it back. If it comes back easily like a piece of carpet, it's likely grubs. Spotting grubs underneath is a sure sign these larvae are killing the lawn.

Using an insecticide for grub control in July can help kill off grubs that start hatching in August through September. Grub eggs do well in sunny patches of lawn that are well watered. More shade may deter them. There's also the option of letting the lawn go dormant and not watering it, but you will be left with a brown, unappealing lawn.

## Pet urine

Pets can also damage a lawn. Pet urine can create burnt patches and significant discolouration on the lawn, particularly if the dog or cat uses one area consistently as their potty zone.

The best way to prevent urine damage is to walk your dog so that he or she will not have free reign of the yard. However, sometimes dogs get out or stray cats and dogs visit your yard and relieve themselves without your knowledge. So this method is not foolproof. Therefore, you should take added action to maintain a lush lawn.

First, make sure that the soil and lawn is in good health by fertilizing and taking care of it properly. Second, water can dilute urine and neutralize its corrosive properties. Some have found that diluted urine can often act as a fertilizer to grass. You may have noticed that the outside ring of a urine-burned spot is often greener than the healthy lawn. Try to dilute the urine prior to 8 hours having elapsed for the best effect.



Preventing lawn damage includes cleaning up after pets, whose urine can cause discolouration in the yard.

## Burrowing animals

Moles and voles are among the more common lawn damage culprits. Voles are small rodents that resemble mice but have stouter bodies, shorter tails and rounder heads. They feast on everything from bulbs, succulent roots, ground cover, and even dead animals in their paths. Their burrows enable them to move around relatively undetected, typically until the damage has already been done.

Moles, although they have a similar-sounding name, are not related to voles and look very different. They have a cylindrical

body shape with velvety fur, very small or invisible ears and large paws for digging. Moles often feed on earthworms and other small invertebrates found in the soil. The burrows they create are essentially traps for the worms, who fall into the burrows, where moles easily access them. Moles often stockpile worms for later consumption in underground larders.

Voles can be kept away with natural vole predators, such as cats, hawks, owls and snakes. Mouse traps can also capture voles when baited. You may also dig sharp materials or chicken wire into your soil around planting beds to make it uncomfortable for voles and moles to tunnel through.

Moles can also be controlled with traps. Finding active mole tunnels will help you place the traps effectively to either kill or simply contain the mole. The live animal can be relocated to a site where they won't cause trouble.

Lawn damage can occur through a number of different factors. Finding out the cause can help you find an effective treatment.

## Have fun, play safe

Swimming pools are great ways to have fun and relax — but make sure you follow a few basic safety tips to make your leisure time as safe as possible this summer. And keep in mind — adult supervision is essential at all times when children are using a pool.

Keep a cordless phone or cell phone nearby while the pool is in use for emergencies. If you need to leave the pool area, make sure another adult is present to supervise young bathers. When the pool is not being used, make sure it is covered by a safety cover.

When the pool is uncovered, it can be a tempting playground for children. For added safety, keep pool toys out of the water when they're not being used and store them out of sight. Never leave toys on the deck or leave a table or chairs near a pool fence that could allow a child to climb over into the pool area.

Make sure you have a clear, unobstructed view of the pool from inside the house and never allow horseplay or roughhousing (dunking, pushing or throwing someone into the pool) or playful screaming for help that could mask a real emergency.

Enclose your yard with a permanent fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate and install a portable mesh fence around the immediate pool perimeter to keep children out of the pool once they are in the back yard.

All doors leading from the house to the pool should also have a self-latching, self-closing mechanism and all windows should have window locks installed to prevent a child from climbing through.

More pool and hot tub safety information and guidelines can be found online at [www.safepools.ca](http://www.safepools.ca) or toll-free at 1-800-879-7066.

— News Canada

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# How to improve your landscape before selling

**S**elling a house is seldom easy, and homeowners are often willing to do whatever it takes to make their home more attractive to prospective buyers. One of the areas sellers typically focus on is the home's landscaping. A well-maintained lawn and garden increases a property's curb appeal considerably, increasing the chances a buyer will have a strong first impression of the home.

But homeowners don't need to have a green thumb to ensure their lawn improves curb appeal. The following are a few tricks of the trade savvy sellers can employ to make their home an instant hit when buyers pull up to the curb.

• **Colour the landscape.** The plants outside a home shouldn't stick out like a sore thumb, but a few splashes of colour can make a home more appealing. For the cost of some annuals, which are typically inexpensive, homeowners can turn a drab flower bed into a colourful spot bound to catch a buyer's eye.

• **Lay down new layers of mulch.** Mulch is not only good for plants, helping them to retain moisture while inhibiting weed germination and growth, but a fresh layer of mulch also adds to a yard's aesthetic appeal. Mulch made of wood or bark chips is also slow to decay, so apply a new batch right before the "For Sale" sign is erected, and you might not have to apply another batch before selling the home.

• **Prune trees and shrubs.** Pruning trees and shrubs is one of the easiest and most effective ways to improve a landscape. Dead branches in shrubs and trees might suggest to buyers that the homeowners weren't terribly preoccupied with maintenance, and this might cause them to think twice about making an offer. Stay on top of pruning, regardless of what season it is, and be sure to remove any fallen branches from the yard on a regular basis.

• **Clean bird baths and other water features.** Water features create a peaceful atmosphere around a property if they're well maintained. If not, buyers won't see the yard as a sanctuary but rather a place where mosquitoes congregate and odours emanate from algae-filled water. Remove any debris from water features, including leaves and algae, and clean the filters so water is always clear.

• **Invest in a power washer.** Buying a power washer might be a tad over the top, but homeowners whose yards are filled with grimy surfaces might find a power washer can work wonders at restoring a



*Cleaning water features around the property is one way for homeowners to increase the curb appeal of their home.*

home's external appeal. If plants are in pots that are covered in years-old dirt and grime, a power washer can restore the pot's luster in a matter of minutes. Spray down walkways and even home siding that has fallen victim to dirt and grime over the years.

• **If planting trees, don't go too big.** Especially large trees are not always attractive to prospective buyers, who likely won't want sight lines obstructed or won't want to worry about a tree falling and destroying their home during a storm.

• **Address issues with weeds.** A prevalent problem with weeds around the property is another situation that some buyers might feel is indicative of neglect. Weeds are a pretty simple problem to remedy, so buyers might be correct to assume weeds around the property are there because the homeowner was not concerned with maintenance. Lay mulch around flower beds and gardens to reduce weed growth, and pull any weeds from sidewalks and the driveway. Once weeds are pulled, spray areas that were infested with a weed-treatment product to ensure weeds don't grow back.

A well-maintained landscape is a great way for men and women hoping to sell their homes to make a strong first impression.

## Lovely lawns

*Alie Berghuis of Eastern Engines Power Equipment, Williamsburg, is pictured here with a showroom full of lawn mower models, prepared for the busy spring season ahead.*

*Press Photo —  
Smith-Millar*



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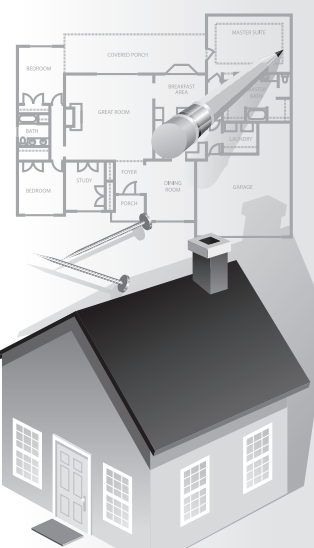


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## Grilling with wood and smoke

Slow smoked chicken and ribs are staples of the traditional barbecue. The deep smoky flavours and fall-off-the-bone tenderness is a hallmark of the low-and-slow — a low temperature, cooked over a long time — cooking technique.

Originally, open-pit fires were used for the slow cooking process. Luckily now with a smoker box, wood chips and a gas barbecue, backyard chefs can taste the smoky flavour of wood and cook with the convenience of gas.

Here are some helpful tips for adding smoky flavour to your next backyard meal:

- Wood chips should be soaked in water for at least an hour before using. Drain them and add them to a stainless steel or cast iron smoker box.

- Fill the smoker box two-thirds of the way with chips and place the box on either the heat plate above the burner or on the cooking grids.

- Add wood chips five to 10 minutes before putting your meat on the grill

— raw meats take on smoky flavours much better than even slightly cooked meats. Having a smoky environment to start will enhance and deepened flavours.

- Smoked meats will have a deep pink ring on the outside — this indicates how deep the smoke has penetrated your meat.

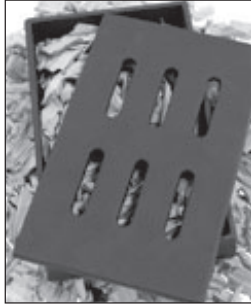
- Hickory is probably the most famous smoking hardwood. It imparts a strong hearty flavour to meats and is used mostly to smoke pork shoulders and ribs.

- Mesquite is one of the most popular woods, it is sweeter and more delicate than hickory, and is a perfect complement to richly flavoured meats such as beef, duck or lamb.

- Apple has a sweet, mild flavour and is used mostly with pork and game, but can be used for poultry as well.

More grilling tips and recipes are available at [www.broilkingbbq.com](http://www.broilkingbbq.com).

— *News Canada*



## Recipe gives a tantalizing taste to grilled vegetables

Hot, lazy summer days are too precious to waste in the kitchen. Enhance your outdoor leisure time with a visit to a local farmer's stand or market to choose fresh vegetables for this colourful recipe.

### Grilled Vegetable Napoleons

#### Ingredients

Substitute or add other vegetables as you wish. Some nice additions might be new potatoes or red peppers. Although the stacks are attractive and easy to serve, you may also arrange the grilled vegetables and cheese in a casserole.

- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 large eggplant, cut in 12 slices (½" thick)
- 3 medium zucchinis, cut in 24 slices (¼" thick)
- 3 large tomatoes, cut in 6 slices (½" thick)
- 3 medium red onions, cut in 12 slices (½" thick)
- ¾ cup ricotta cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tsp fresh thyme, chopped
- ½ lb mozzarella cheese, sliced ¼" thick
- 6 sprigs fresh rosemary



#### Directions

Preheat barbecue and set on low. Brush vegetables with olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and grill slowly until tender, turning once. Transfer the vegetables to a tray, arranging them in a single layer, and cover tightly with plastic wrap. The vegetables may be grilled a day in advance, and refrigerated after cooling. Bring the vegetables back to room temperature before proceeding.

#### Assembly

Stir together the ricotta, thyme, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Place one slice of eggplant on a lightly oiled grill sheet or foil pan. Spread 1 tablespoon of the ricotta mixture over the eggplant. Cover with 2 slices of zucchini, 1 slice of onion, 1 slice of mozzarella, 1 slice of tomato, 2 slices of zucchini, and 1 slice of onion. Spread 1 tablespoon of the ricotta mixture over the onion, and top with another slice of eggplant. Repeat this procedure with the remaining vegetables to make 5 more stacks.

Insert a wooden skewer through the centre of each stack to create a hole from top to bottom. Remove the bottom leaves from each rosemary sprig, leaving 1 inch of leaves on the top. Insert 1 sprig into the centre hole in each napoleon, and return to the barbecue.

Heat for about 10 minutes on low, or until mozzarella is melted and vegetables are warmed through.

More grilling recipes are available on Broil King's website [www.broilkingbbq.com](http://www.broilkingbbq.com).

— *News Canada*

## Backyard barbecue safety tips

- Check for leaks. Inspect the propane tank as well as its hoses, for leaks, cracks, and corrosion.

- Dress in tighter clothing while grilling. Loose-fitting clothing, particularly long sleeves, can dip into the grill and catch fire.

- For those who prefer a charcoal grill, once the cooking has been completed be careful to extinguish all briquettes. As a

safety measure, pour water over them.

- Never move the grill indoors. A grill, whether it's propane or charcoal, should never be used indoors because of the risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Keep kids and pets clear.

- Don't be liberal with the lighter fluid. Not much lighter fluid is necessary, and fluid should never be applied after the coals have lit.

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This photo — sent to the Winchester Press courtesy of Manderley Turf Products — was taken at Manderley's Moose Creek farm.

## Manderley wins industry distinction

### MOOSE CREEK

Manderley Turf Products has been named one of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies for 2011.

Manderley — which has a farm in Moose Creek — was recognized in 2012 with the national award sponsored by Deloitte, CIBC, *National Post*, and Queen's School of Business.

"Manderley is proud to accept this celebrated business award while representing the farming and agricultural community, especially Turfgrass Sod Producers from around the world," said Greg Skotnicki, who is president of Manderley Turf Products and a director of the Nursery Sod Growers Association

of Ontario (NSGA). "With 51 years' experience, Manderley has grown to be Canada's largest sod supplier and an industry pioneer, helping to champion the NSGA Green Certification program for sod farms, as well as water-saving, drought-tolerant sod."

Established in 1993, Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies is a national awards program, recognizing Canadian companies that have implemented world-class business practices and created value in innovative ways.

"Being named among Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies recognizes that Manderley has a world-class staff committed to creating world-class value for clients," said Skotnicki.

## Creating an attractive dog run

Millions of dogs share the homes and hearts of people across the country. Dogs can provide companionship, affection and joy. But when dogs spend time outdoors and cause damage to lawns and gardens, that cute and cuddly appeal might dwindle.

Although dogs are beneficial in numerous ways, their tendency to create unsightly messes in the yard have many homeowners wringing their hands in frustration. Erecting a dog run or using other strategies may help to alleviate any damage the dog causes.

A dog run is essentially a fenced-in part of the yard where dogs can play or be trained to relieve themselves. As most pet owners know, dogs, particularly females, because their urine is concentrated to one spot on the lawn, can create unsightly urine burns. Looking at patches of burnt, straw-like grass where a lush lawn used to be can be aggravating. The same can be said for finding dog "presents" all over the yard. All it takes is stepping in a pile of joy to raise blood pressure. Plus, there's the extra work of tracking down such presents and having to clean them up. This can be time-consuming with a big yard, not to mention messy and smelly.

Containing your dog to a run will keep messes all in one place. When the dog cannot be supervised by you, a dog run will be a way to let the dog spend time outside in a way that he or she won't get into trouble. The run can be constructed of any material you desire, whether chain-link fencing, wood slats, lattice material, or tightly spaced shrubbery. Pea gravel is a good material to use on the floor of the dog

run. Not only is pea gravel aesthetically appealing, but it also allows urine to run through into the soil below and will be able to keep feces above for easier cleanup. It also can be hosed off and topped off when gravel is depleted.

Avoid landscape fabrics or artificial turf that is not designed for pets. It may collect waste and lead to the proliferation of bacteria, which can create odour and unsanitary conditions.

Many people like to camouflage dog runs from the rest of the yard. Trailing vines of ivy or other upward-growing plants may suffice. Avoid planting any poisonous plants next to the run so they are not accidentally consumed. It is also best to keep sweet nectar plants away to minimize bee and wasps from flying close to the dog.

If you do not want to segregate your dog from the rest of the yard, find ways to prevent him or her from getting into places you'd rather keep off limits.

Cobble rock is often difficult for dogs to walk on. Use it to form barriers of three to five inches in width to prevent access to certain parts of the yard. Border planting beds with thorny bushes or big rocks that don't allow traction.

Do make a dog running path by the fence where there is a lot of foot traffic. This way your dog can run back and forth and watch the neighbours go by. Again, pea gravel is a good choice here so that it will mask paw-trodden grass.

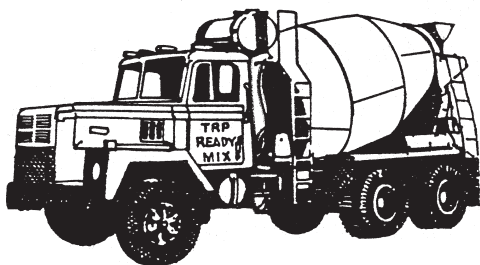
Dogs will behave like dogs, so pet owners should learn the best way to enjoy the back yard together. Training the pooch to relieve himself in one spot and creating places that are safe for him to urinate may alleviate destructive behaviour.

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### Grass-green lawn gear

Mike Garland of Green Tech Ag & Turf, Winchester, said there are many lawn tractor models available to suit the various needs of local customers. Press Photo — Smith-Millar

## Riding mowers make lawn care more manageable

Homeowners love extensive, lush, green lawns. But the elbow grease that goes into tending to the landscape is far less beloved. One task that routinely causes bouts of procrastination is mowing the lawn. But riding mowers can change the way homeowners view mowing the lawn.

Traditionally, mowing the lawn has been a task largely handled by homeowners pushing walk-behind mowers. Whether these mowers were powered by gasoline, electricity, or simply human power, they were the type of mower that was generally the most popular and most affordable.

Individuals had different features they could consider in their mowers, including horsepower and the size of the deck. There were also mowers that could bag or mulch. Despite these features, homeowners with a particularly large back or front yard — or both — may have found lawn mowing to be tedious work. Those who have yards of almost an acre or more often find riding mowers to be an efficient method of mowing the lawn, and one that also does not require as much

effort out in the sun.

A riding mower's cutting deck is in front, while a lawn or gardening tractor's cutting deck is mid-mounted, which is how they differ. Lawn tractors also may be able to accept other landscaping attachments. A riding mower is more maneuverable than a tractor, particularly for landscapes that may have trees or planting beds.

Cost is the one thing that may deter some homeowners from a riding mower. While a walk-behind mower could cost anywhere from a few hundred dollars and up, riding mowers generally start at \$1,000 and may be as much as \$10,000, depending on the extra features.

However, some find that what riding mowers lack in affordability, they more than make up for in convenience. Plus, buying a riding mower may pay for itself in savings on landscaping services over the course of one to two seasons.

As with any lawn tool, it's important to note that riding mowers are not toys, and they should not be handled by children, nor should children be allowed to ride along while mowing.

### Mowing into spring

As is often the case, technology helps with the advancement of many household products: televisions, computers, microwaves, and even lawn care equipment. Take the Champion model from Simplicity, an American manufacturing company. The modern mower allows for the ultimate maneuverability, which allows you to get into those hard to reach places.

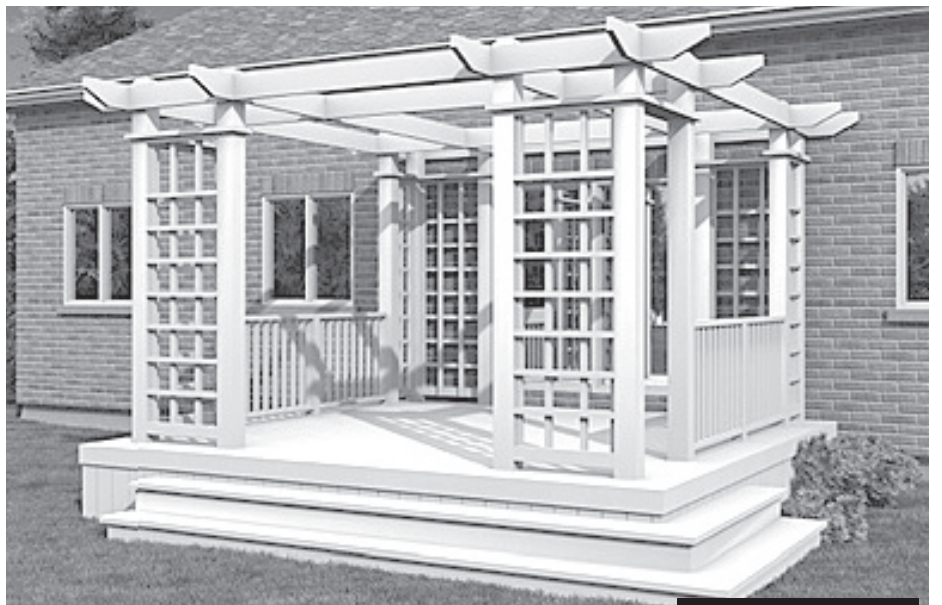
Ron Skuce (pictured), an employee at Winchester's Skuce Repairs, said it has been an ideal model for many customers. "There's a lot less trimming [needed], and no more large patterns of uncut grass," he added.

Press Photo — Uhrig



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## Don't get stung by pesky insects

**B**ees and wasps can be a pain to live around ... literally. Exploring a number of traps and repellents could be the key to enjoying the outdoors this season.

Most bees are not aggressive and look to avoid scuffles with people. They may sting out of perceived danger or fear, or if a person comes too close to a nest or surprises the winged creature. Wasps, such as yellow jackets, could be a bit more spunky and territorial.

While bees and wasps can be beneficial, policing other insect populations and pollinating flowers, most people prefer to keep them at bay.

### Repellents

A first try at keeping wasps and bees away from outdoor living spaces should involve some sort of natural repellent. Many insects are put off by certain smells. You can try citronella. Some people swear by baby powder, and dust it on themselves and other areas of the garden. One of the more effective repellents are mock wasp nests. Because these insects are territorial and will often fight to the death, they won't build a nest too close to another wasp nest. Using a fake nest can deter wasps from setting up home base nearby.

### Traps

For those who have found that repellents simply aren't making a dent in the buzzing population, traps are the next option to try. It's possible to make all-natural traps that don't require harsh chemicals.

One of the most common traps can be made simply from an empty soda bottle. Cut off the top of the bottle so that it is in two parts, the round reservoir and the

pouring spout. Fill the reservoir with water and a little dish liquid. Tie the bait to the bottom of the spout and invert the top of the bottle so that it forms a funnel into which the wasps will fly. Coat the entrance of the funnel with a little cooking oil or petroleum jelly so the wasp will slide into the opening.

The wasp will investigate the bait and eventually tire of flying around inside of the bottle. The soapy water will be there to trap the wasp once it has fallen, and ensure that plain water tension will not suspend the wasp and prevent drowning.

If these types of traps are placed out early enough, an individual can sometimes trap the queen and cause the nest to be built elsewhere. Some tips include frequently changing the bait and burying the deceased wasps so they cannot warn their friends of the danger through olfactory warnings. Different baits work better at different times of the year. In the spring, try hamburger meat. In the summer, sweet sources of food, such as crushed grapes, will work.

There also are commercially made traps that will catch bees and wasps.

### Sprays

Some people say that vinegar works to repel honeybees but can attract wasps. Others say that spraying bleach on wasps will kill them. Others argue it only angers the bug and causes it to sting. Commercial wasp sprays will be effective but can have a host of chemicals in them and may not be safe around children and pets. Sprays should be used as a last resort.

If hornets, wasps or other types of bees are a nuisance that cannot be controlled by the homeowner, a professional should be brought in.



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# Protect your garden from hungry animals

Homes full of garden beds with blooming flowers and foliage can seem warm and inviting. Planting flowers is one of the easiest ways to transform the appearance of a home with minimal effort and expense. Too often, homeowners plant annuals and perennials only to find their hard work has been damaged by hungry animals, like deer, rabbits, and underground pests. There are ways to keep animals away from plants — many of which are humane and environmentally safe.

Keeping furry marauders away from the garden is something individuals who live in rural or suburban areas have to consider when planting. Many communities are growing and encroaching on the natural habitats of wild animals. With some of their natural food sources diminishing, animals may decide to partake of the easy pickings that come from residential home gardens.

If you understand how these

animals feed, you can take precautions to restrict access to planting beds. Rabbits tend to munch on vegetables and ornamental plants. Small in stature and not able to scale fences very easily, rabbits might be deterred by a low fence surrounding plants. Consider digging some chicken wire below the fence a few inches to discourage digging under the fence. The fence should be 18 inches high, and you should keep the openings no more than one inch because rabbits can squeeze through small openings.

In terms of moles, voles, and other burrowing animals, the key is preventing underground access. Chicken wire or another abrasive material put under the garden soil can help keep underground animals from burrowing under and then up into the heart of the garden.

Deer are another story altogether. They are tall animals capable of rising up on hind legs to stretch out and reach



Deer and rabbits can eat many garden plants down to the ground.

branches of trees and bushes. Therefore, taller fences may be needed to protect the garden. But these can sometimes be unsightly, especially in a front yard. Therefore, look for natural barriers that can keep them out. They may be deterred by thorny bushes or plants. Daisies, poppies, narcissus, rudbeckia, achillea, agastache, aster, lupine, coreopsis, verbascum, centaurea,

and echinacea are available in many varieties and are not attractive to deer or rabbits.

Here are some additional strategies that you can try.

- **Create narrow pathways between raised beds.** Rabbits will feel like they are in prime locations for predators to get at them in this type of situation and may be less likely to venture in. Deer may not be able to navigate

narrow paths.

- **Use mulch.** In addition to benefitting the plants, keeping soil moist and fertilizing the areas, mulch also deters many animals.

- **Interplant different species of plants.** Some animals don't want to bother picking tasty plants out among other varieties they don't like. So mix plants with ones that animals find unpleasant.

- **Use other natural deterrents.** Animals may be kept away by scents of their predators. Urine from coyote, foxes, dogs, and cats may help. You can also try human hair, cat litter, and soap flakes.

- **Create an animal-friendly area elsewhere.** Feed the deer and rabbits the foods they love somewhere away from your garden. They may fill up with favourites and stay away from your flowers and vegetables.

- Traps may work. As a last resort, use humane traps to collect animals and release them elsewhere.



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Press Photos — Smith-Millar, Uhrig



Pictured are (clockwise from top left): Tony and Jane Hendriks of Meadow Greens Nursery, Marionville; Andy Brunner of A.B. Greenhouse, Chesterville; Chris Roach (back, left) and Rachel Hewetson, owners/operators of The Country Touch Landscaping Services, Elma, with helpers Katherine Hewetson-Roach and her grandmother, Carol; and Phil Garland of Ritchie Feed and Seed, Winchester.

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