

Landscape Maintenance Checklist

The first thing to remember with any landscape is that it's a living, breathing entity. Even the simplest, easy-to-care for yard will need watering, feeding, cleaning, and disease prevention. If you aren't a big fan of yard maintenance, it might be wise to implement landscaping that's easy to maintain.

Indeed, landscape maintenance is much more involved than the average homeowner believes. Mowing, mulching, and weeding are frequently done but rarely done right.

Often, the difference between solid and poor landscape maintenance is in the details. Taking those few extra minutes to do the job right will pay off enormous dividends with a more beautiful lawn and fewer maintenance problems in the future.

So, how do you do the job right? Simple: you research, create, and diligently follow a landscape maintenance checklist.

This is only a baseline checklist. Different landscaping features and designs on your individual lawn and landscaping may require their own maintenance items, but this will get you started...

Landscape Maintenance Checklist

Planting areas

- Some plants require constant attention, while others won't add anything to your landscape maintenance. Check on the condition of your plants during spring.
- Covering ground with organic mulch will help soil retain moisture and keep weeds at bay.
- After the first hard freeze, cut back plant branches and cover them with mulch.
- Many flowers do better when you dead-head them (i.e., pinch off spent blooms), which encourages new growth.

Insect control

- Sometimes a plant can be washed clean with a strong stream of water. Many garden centers sell insects such as ladybugs to get rid of bugs and worms.
- Chemicals are also an option; however, use extreme caution when applying them.
- Consider using household "natural" chemicals to control insects. For example, placing a shallow plate filled with beer in your slug-infested garden usually will attract and kill these pests.

Weeding

- Removing the entire weed by its roots is the surest way to get rid of it.
- Herbicides do work, but use caution when applying. They will not only kill the weed, but also other nearby plants.
- Keep weeds to a minimum by covering the soil with an inch or two of mulch.

Weed prevention

- An inch-thick layer of mulch will keep your planting beds relatively weed-free.
- Grass is a plant that grows thick and bushy when healthy and will usually choke out any other weeds.
- Some chemical fertilizers come with a "pre-emergent," which kills the seeds in the spring when the plants are dormant.

Mowing

- Don't cut grass too short. Longer grass is healthier and retains water better.
- Many mowers come with a mulching option that cuts grass into tiny bits and returns it to the lawn. This returns important nutrients to the soil, and reduces the need for fertilizer.

Leaf removal

- Remove all leaves from grassy areas and flower beds. The layer of leaves can restrict the amount of light reaching the lawn and trap water near the roots.

Fertilizing

- Depending on your climate, fertilize your lawn and growing beds two to five times per growing season. Both chemical and organic options are available.