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When to tackle weeds in your lawn

Weeds are the bane of lawn and garden enthusiasts. Weeds can spread rapidly and overrun pristine grass, choking lawns and robbing them of their lush green look. In garden beds, weeds can steal water from thirsty plants, threatening their survival.

A proactive approach that prevents weed growth is easier and less frustrating than dealing with weeds after they have sprouted. That means addressing weeds before they release seeds, and not waiting so long that the damage is already done. According to the home and landscape experts with This Old House, spraying herbicide for weeds in June and July can address weeds before seeds are set. Tilling and installing a new lawn in late August or the beginning of September can help the lawn establish itself before the first frosts arrive, all the while avoiding weed growth.

The weed control experts at Roundup also suggest a springtime application of weed killer if this is the desired route. Early treatment can prevent weed roots from spreading too far in the soil, which can reduce the chances that weed remnants will be left behind to grow at a later time.

Homeowners with small lawns or gardens or those who prefer hand-weeding or using non-chemical ways to treat weeds must take steps to address the weeds early. Gardeners can try suffo-

cating weeds by placing wood, blocks or plastic over them. Wet newspaper used as mulch can block weed formation and also clear patches of unwanted grass so that garden beds can be mapped out. Pouring boiling water on weeds or pulling them by hand is more effective when roots are young and have not yet spread.

The UK-based company Lawnsmith also suggests a mid-spring weed killer application. This ensures that all weeds that have surfaced are addressed and that none are missed by weeding too early.

The Idaho-based Town & Country Gardens suggests lawn and garden enthusiasts wait to



tackle weeds. By waiting and applying weed treatments in the fall, when dandelions and other weeds are absorbing food and nutrients in larger quantities to survive winter, homeowners can rid their lawns and gardens of weeds efficiently.

Weeds are a nuisance and an eyesore in lawns and gardens. Choosing the right time to treat them can ensure they don't adversely affect lush landscapes and thriving gardens.

Spring Cleaning Your Washing Machine

The days are getting longer, the trees are budding, and flowers are starting to bloom. That also means it's time to open the windows and start spring cleaning. Though the projects requiring attention might be plentiful, don't forget to add your washing machine to your list. Start on the inside and work your way to the outside.

Top Load Washer

Did you know you should clean your fabric softener dispenser? Over time, liquid fabric softener residue can build up in the dispenser so it's important to remove the dispenser from the agitator to clean it.

You can do so by squeezing the lower part of the dispenser, pulling directly upward and tilting it toward you slightly. Once you've removed the dispenser, you can remove the bottom part of the dispenser by squeezing on the bottom part to separate the pieces and removing the dispenser cup. Once you pull the pieces apart, soak them in warm, soapy water and rinse clean. A toothbrush will work wonders on any residue leftover in the dispenser or in the agitator.

Hold on to that toothbrush and use it to clean any residue that may have accumulated on the inside of the agitator vain

as well. Rinse thoroughly with water to flush.

Front Load Washer

Over time, residue can accumulate in the dispenser drawer, but it's quick and easy to clean. Pull the drawer out until it stops. Then press the tab under the drawer to release and remove it. Pour hot water into the dispenser drawer, making sure it flushes through each compartment and if needed, use a small brush to thoroughly clean out any residue.

Though Speed Queen washers don't get the same musty odor people often associate with front load washers, it's still good practice to check for lint and wipe down the rubber gasket occasionally.

Cabinet

Skip the scouring pads and abrasive cleansers on the outside of your machine. Use only a damp or sudsy cloth for cleaning the cabinet and control panel. Some cleaning products may harm the finish on the control panel or damage the interior so stick to a gentle cleaner that doesn't contain alcohol. Wipe the panel dry after cleaning.



Did You Know?

Spring cleaning is a ritual that many people participate in as the last vestiges of winter disappear. Spring cleaning is a time to open windows, deep clean rooms and closets and take down and launder window treatments and linens. Others use spring cleaning as a time to sort and donate or discard clutter that might have accumulated over the winter. Even though spring cleaning seems like a modern invention, the act of spring cleaning is believed to have originated centuries ago. Some say that the ancient Chinese cleaned in preparation for their New Year as they hoped to wipe away any bad luck and misfortune from the previous year. Similarly, the ancient Hebrew practice of thoroughly cleansing a home before the springtime feast of Passover may have evolved into the spring cleaning we know today. Another possible connection is the tradition of “shaking the house clean” in Iran. Iranians celebrate Now Rouz (Persian New Year) with many different rituals, one of which involves buying new clothes and cleaning every corner of the family home to signify renewal.



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Preparing garden beds for spring and beyond



Gardening enthusiasts may have been thinking about their landscape plans throughout the winter, eager to once again get their hands dirty with soil. Whether a home gardener is making preparations for edible crops or beautiful flowers, he or she must take time to make the soil amenable to planting. To establish hearty, durable plants, gardeners can focus on three main areas: addressing soil composition, cultivating and adding nutrients.

Soil composition

Many gardeners prefer growing a variety of plants in their gardens. Such an approach requires taking inventory of the type of soil in one's garden and making the necessary modifications so that the types of vegetables, herbs, shrubs, or flowers that will be planted can grow in strongly. In fact, according to the plant company Proven Winners, the most im-

portant step to developing good roots is preparing the soil.

Take a sample of the soil and examine it to see what is present. If the soil is too full of clay, too sandy, too dense, or too loose, that can lead to problems where plants cannot grow in strong. Work with a garden center to add the right soil amendments to make a rich soil. This may include organic compost or manure, which will also add nutrients to the soil.

Cultivation

Cultivating the soil can involve different steps. Removal of weeds, errant rocks, roots, and other items will help prepare the soil. Mother Earth News suggests working on garden soil when the soil is damp but never wet; otherwise, garden soil can become messy and clumpy. Use a digging fork or shovel to lightly turn the soil when it's mostly dry. Gentle tillings also can open up the

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Continued from page 6

soil to incorporate the nutritional amendments and relieve compaction that likely occurred from freezing temps and snow pressure. Tilling also helps with drainage and oxygen delivery to roots. The DIY Network suggests turning over soil at a depth of 12 inches to work the soil — about the length of a shovel spade. However, the resource Earth Easy says that existing garden beds have a complex soil ecosystem and simply top-dressing with compost or manure can be enough preparation for planting. Gardeners can experiment with the methods that work best for their gardens.

Nutrition

Testing the pH and the levels of certain nutrients in the soil, namely nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, will give gardeners an idea of other soil additions that may be

needed. Soils with a pH below 6.2 often can benefit from the addition of lime several weeks before planting. Soil tests will determine just how much fertilizer to add to the soil. Complete fertilizers will have equal amounts of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. Individual fertilizers can amend the soil with only these nutritional elements that are needed.

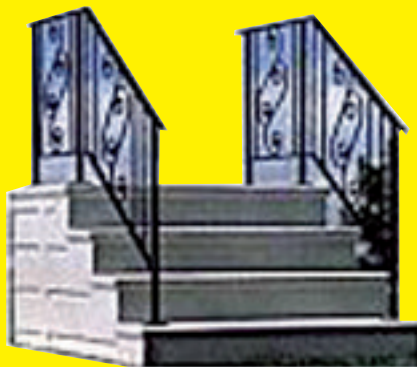
Top-dressing empty beds with a layer of mulch or compost can prevent weed growth and preserve moisture until it is time to plant. If existing shrubs or plants are in garden beds, use more care so as not to disturb roots or dig too deeply.

Preparing garden beds takes some effort initially, but can be well worth the work when plants flourish throughout the growing season.

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Stock up on gardening essentials

Gardening attracts new devotees year after year. While Baby Boomers may spend more on gardening than any other demographic, even millennials are getting on the gardening bandwagon.

A 2016 National Gardening Survey from the National Gardening Market Research Company found the average amount spent on backyard or balcony gardening projects exceeded \$400 per household. More than \$36 billion was spent in 2015, and the vast majority of the six million “new” gar-

dening households belonged to millennials.

When it comes to outfitting a gardening shed, gardeners will not want to be without certain tools and gear.

- **Digging shovel:** A rounded-blade digging shovel is needed to plant shrubs and trees as well as to excavate areas in a landscape.

- **Rake:** A rake can be used to clear the ground, remove thatch and leaves from a lawn and level soil in a garden bed.

- **Hand tools:** Hand tools, such as a hand fork and trowel, are es-

sential for small digging jobs, especially when working with flower pots or containers.

- **Edging spade:** This flat-blade shovel is handy to have around because of its versatility. Edging spades can slice turf, edge gardens and cut through roots.

- **Pruners:** Sharpened pruners can cut through stems and branches effortlessly.

- **Hose:** Choose a high-quality hose that is lightweight and durable, as hoses will always be necessary.



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3. Meet one of the Income Guidelines provided below:



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5	\$0 – \$28,440	\$28,441 – \$56,880	\$56,881 – \$85,320
6	\$0 – \$32,580	\$32,581 – \$65,160	\$65,161 – \$97,740
7	\$0 – \$36,730	\$36,731 – \$73,460	\$73,461 – \$110,190
8	\$0 – \$40,890	\$40,891 – \$81,780	\$81,781 – \$122,670
Add for each additional person	\$4,160		
Number based on 2015 U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines			

Participants in the program must:

1. Pay a \$1,000 administration fee after approval for participation notification is received and only \$750 administration fee for sanitary sewer tap-in
2. Grant Permission to anyone involved in this project to enter the property. This includes but not limited to: health department officials, the funding agency (Ohio EPA), soil evaluator, system designer, all contractors bidding on installation, installation contractor, and employees.
3. Not contract with any local sewage installation contractor or designer as all work is contracted through the local Health Department and their administrating agent. Contractors registered with the local health department for sewer installation and design will be contracted to bid each system.
4. Pay the administrative fee before the system is designed or installed.
5. Pay all program matching dollars before installation may begin.

It is important that all applicants be aware, this program **WILL NOT** cover the following costs:

1. Abandonment of drinking water wells, even if required by the local Health Dept. for an Operation Permit
2. Administrative costs
3. Installation of a sewer system for a new home.
4. Installation of a replacement system for a Property Owner under contract to sell their home. Please note that purchaser may be eligible.

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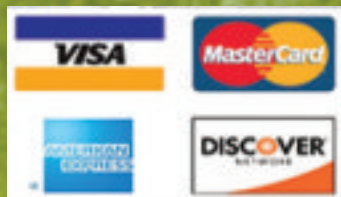
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Fresh Home Upgrades for Spring

FAMILY FEATURES

After a long winter cooped up indoors, spring is the perfect time to start re-imagining your home and making upgrades that create a fresh, welcoming vibe. These project ideas – some big, some small – can help breathe new life into your home so you're ready to enjoy your favorite rooms to the fullest.

Air it out

Months of closed windows and doors can make any room feel dusty and stale. As soon as temperatures allow, throw open the windows and skylights to let the fresh air chase away the remnants of winter. It's a perfect time to launder window treatments and clean area rugs.

After a few passes with a carpet cleaner, allow rugs to air-dry outdoors. If you're considering an update to the overall decor, changing out these textiles is an easy and affordable way to create a new look. Just donate the used drapes and rugs after cleaning instead of bringing them back into the room.

Shift your outlook

When contemplating changes to a room's aesthetic, most people focus on the floor, walls and elements like furniture and accessories. As some homeowners are discovering, there's a whole other space waiting to be discovered. The ceiling, a fifth wall of sorts, opens up endless creative design opportunities.

Whether you're seeking more natural light, access to fresh air, a sense of spaciousness or a way to bring sophistication to a room, a skylight may be just the solution. For example, Velux room-darkening and light-filtering blinds can add a splash of color just where you least expect it, and they're efficient in shielding your space from the sun, meaning the blinds and installation are eligible for a 30 percent tax credit. Learn more at whyskylights.com.

Paint to perfection

Over time, once cheerful walls can grow dull. Create a livelier ambiance with a fresh coat of paint, either in the same shade or something completely new. If you're not sure exactly where to start, tackle the project room

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by room. To choose the right hue, select a favorite item in the room, such as an heirloom throw blanket or a piece of wall art, and consider color shades that complement the item well.

Make what's old new again

Sometimes a fresh perspective is as simple as rearranging a room to better fit your needs. Over time, the furnishings can become almost an afterthought because they've been in place so long. Try moving things around to create new conversation groupings or to highlight a piece that has been tucked away in the shadows. An updated arrangement may inspire you to add and embellish with some simple new

accessories or accent pieces for a room that only looks brand new.

Get earth smart

With all of the new growth and hues of green that abound during spring, it's natural to be more mindful of the environment. Earth-friendly upgrades like switching out inefficient lighting or installing low-flow toilets and shower heads can make a sizable difference. Another option for energy conservation: Look for ways to maximize natural light for heat and to brighten rooms. Well-placed windows and skylights can harness energy naturally, so you can minimize your reliance on electricity for comfort and convenience.



5 Ways to Make the Most of Your 5th Wall

- 1. Start with a smooth canvas.** This means eliminating any details like popcorn ceilings or other texturing that may appear dated and dingy.
- 2. Add some color.** Bring character to the room by adding color to the ceiling that complements the traditional walls for a cohesive look. If you have eaves, dormers or other architectural elements, consider painting some and leaving others white for variety and added dimension.
- 3. Introduce natural light.** When it comes from above, natural light brightens a room in a whole new way. An option like a Velux skylight is a sensible solution because it offers plenty of ways to customize the skylight to your specific space and functional needs.
- 4. Enhance with accessories.** Both practical and attractive, blinds are a good idea for a skylight. They let you control the light, such as blocking out harsh rays during the heat of the day but letting the gentle evening light illuminate the room. In addition to choosing a style and color that complements the room decor, also look for features such as remote-control operation and room-darkening textiles.
- 5. Get creative.** Treating your ceiling like a wall opens virtually endless possibilities. Especially if you have some unique architectural features, you can highlight them by adding special touches such as built-in shelves for extra storage or new place to nurture lush house plants.



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