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The Backyard is a Mess!

by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC

Well now – another Summer has passed us by – black flies, mosquitoes, weeds and sunburns. Oh yes, don't forget the humidity!

As the temperatures get a bit cooler, another task lies ahead of us – that's right – that jungle in the backyard. Over the past few months a lot can happen to our backyards:

- Building or replacing the deck.
- Siding or painting the house.
- Building a shed.
- Planting a hedge (or trimming a severely overgrown one that you never quite got around to over the Summer).

Just to name a few!

Now is the time for getting the gardens, flower beds and shrubs ready for the Winter, giving the lawn a last cut or two, putting on the Fall fertilizer and spreading a bit of lime.

There is a lot to do over the next month or two depending upon when the “white stuff” decides to bless us. Remember to take your time – it will be there tomorrow or even the next weekend!

Be sure to pace yourself. Make a list and do not try to do too much in a day or two (especially over the weekend). This is especially true if you have been relaxing and taking it easy for the Summer. If you are still working during the week, do one or two small tasks during the week – this gives you ‘a jump’ on the weekend. When making your list, concentrate on what to accomplish in two hour blocks of time. This way you can pace yourself and see what project or task you may want to tackle on the weekend. Be sure to:

- Be sure to stretch and warm up.
- Schedule breaks – do not get short of breath.
- Be aware of the cooler days and dress accordingly.
- Drink plenty of fluids – even if you are not hot you need to stay hydrated.
- Clean up as you go – a big mess at the end of the day takes longer to clean up and can seem like a tedious and daunting task.
- Take your time especially with more strenuous activities.
- Ask for help – remember “many hands make light work”. Also, get help if it is too heavy. Trying to lift something beyond your means, could cause an injury to your lower back such as a sprain or strain and that would really put you behind on your Fall clean-up schedule.

If you injure yourself:

- Stop the activity.
- Ice for periods of 20 minutes every couple of hours.
- See your health care professional.

If you experience shortness of breath, chest pains, left arm pain, or dizziness, consult with your family physician or local emergency department immediately. These symptoms could be signs of overexertion, or signal a problem with your heart. Better to be safe and sure rather than take a chance.

Now that the lawn is mowed, raked, fertilized and limed, you now have to get ready for the inevitable – yes – the dreaded falling leaves! As soon as the weather cools and the leaves begin to fall, here is a good word of advice – start raking early and do it frequently.

My personal favourite is to use our lawnmower (which has a bag attached to it) to mulch up the leaves and then dump them in the compost pile. In a pinch, you can even use the mulched up leaves. The leaves also get so wet and heavy that you cannot use the lawn mower and can only fill the garbage bags half full!

It is always a good feeling to try to stay ahead of the leaves – although at times this can seem like a losing battle. A rainy Fall can even make it worse with respect to time available to rake leaves, and the dryness of the leaves.

Before long it will be snowing. Hopefully this Winter will not be as long, cold and snowy as the last year. That kind of weather tends to have an unusual effect on a lot of people – decreased activity level. Sitting in front of TV or computer puts a lot of strain on our necks and backs –

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The Seniors' Advocate. P.O. Box 5005, Waverly, Nova Scotia, B2R 1S2

Halifax Chiropractic Clinic
6112 Willow Street
Halifax, NS B3K 1M2
Ph: 1 902 423-9223
Fax: 1 902 423-9666