



Maintenance

Understanding and accounting for the maintenance needs of your landscape is important, whether you're designing a new garden, converting an existing one, or looking to improve the upkeep of your current landscape. Proper maintenance planning ensures that your landscape remains healthy, vibrant, and sustainable.



A well-maintained landscape enhances curb appeal, increases property value, and creates an inviting environment for both residents and wildlife. To achieve these benefits, it's essential to develop a maintenance schedule that includes regular tasks like pruning, weeding, and soil conditioning. Incorporating native plants and water-saving practices into your landscape not only reduces maintenance requirements but also supports local ecosystems by providing habitat and food for native wildlife.

Incorporating regular routines is best for effectively managing maintenance tasks. Regular irrigation maintenance, like monthly checks, not only ensures efficient water use but also prevents issues like leaks or blockages that can lead to costly repairs. By making tasks a routine part of a schedule, you can maintain the longevity and functionality of your landscape. Adequate maintenance along the way is the best strategy for avoiding runaway problems.



Important Terms



Pruning: The selective removal of plant parts to improve structure, encourage healthy growth, and prevent disease.

Limbing: The process of removing branches from a tree to improve its form, health, or safety.

Pheromone: Chemicals used in pest management to disrupt insect mating patterns, reducing pest populations without harmful chemicals.

Mechanical Weed Control: The use of physical methods, such as mowing or hand-pulling, to manage weed growth.

Cultural Weed Control: Techniques that modify the growing environment to reduce weed prevalence, such as crop rotation or mulching.

Overwintering: Protecting plants during the winter months to ensure their survival and healthy resurgence in the spring.

Seasonal Adjust: Modifying irrigation schedules and amounts based on seasonal weather changes to optimize water use.

Valve Box: A protective enclosure for irrigation system valves, providing easy access for maintenance.

Common Weed: Weeds that are widespread and typically easier to manage with proper practices.

Noxious Weed: Invasive weed species that are harmful to the environment, requiring more rigorous control measures.

Companion Planting: The strategic placement of plants together to enhance growth, repel pests, or improve soil health.

Winterization: Preparing a landscape for winter conditions by protecting plants and irrigation systems from cold weather damage.

Fertilization: the deliberate application of nutrients—primarily Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K)—to soil or directly to plants to enhance growth, health, and vigor.

Aeration: Soil aeration is the process of making holes in compacted soil to improve air, water, and nutrient penetration to plant roots, reducing compaction and promoting healthier growth, often done with a core aerator that removes soil plugs.

Deep Root Fertilization: a specialized arboricultural technique that injects liquid nutrients, fertilizer, and soil amendments directly into the soil within a tree or shrub's root zone using a pressurized probe

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Section Navigation



Maintenance Resources

- [New Landscape Establishment](#)
- [Spring Maintenance](#)
- [Run an Irrigation Test Cycle](#)
- [Irrigation Schedule Management](#)
- [Midsummer Maintenance](#)
- [Late Summer Maintenance](#)
- [Dividing Perennials](#)
- [Fall Maintenance](#)
- [Fall Cutbacks](#)
- [Leave the Leaves](#)
- [Landscape Timeline](#)
- [Irrigation Timeline](#)
- [Valve Box Maintenance](#)
- [Weeds](#)
- [Noxious Weed Watch](#)
- [Common Garden Weeds](#)
- [Pests and Disease](#)
- [Pest Repellent Strategies](#)
- [Tree Health](#)
- [Pruning Basics](#)
- [Limbing](#)
- [Winterizing Checklist](#)



Landscape Establishment

Year 1

Year 1 is the most critical year for ensuring the success of your landscape conversion. In this year, it is important that you water regularly as plants begin to root.

- **Water consumption may actually increase during this time;** it's important to water to plant's needs and protect your investment.
- **Weeding is essential.** Weeds must be kept suppressed so as to not compete for water and nutrients or risk spreading.
- **Regular maintenance and adjustment are necessary.** A new landscape must be actively managed and maintained to keep plants healthy. It's not enough during this time to just give them what they need to survive.

Year 2

Year 2 is for slowly backing off the water and additional care and attention. In this year, it is important to strategically stress your plants.

- **Reduce the watering and see how the plants respond.** When they start showing signs of stress, you know their threshold.
- **A little stress during year 2 is OK.** If plants are periodically and temporarily water or nutrient-stressed, they will respond by growing deeper, more robust root systems. Keep up with the weeding regardless!
- **Still monitor them closely.** If your plants are wilting in the middle of the day, that may be too much! The idea is to help them help themselves.

Year 3

Year 3 is for backing off the water to the amount they will receive as mature plants. In this year, your landscape should be more-or-less established.

- **Reduce the watering even further.** Plants should have robust root systems and are adapted to withstand average weather and dry spells.
- **Monitor individuals.** Identify the plants that need the most water; they can be your litmus test and proxy for the other plants in that hydrozone.
- **Maintenance routines should also be established, but on an as-needed basis,** including weeding and other maintenance activities.
- **Irrigation should always be actively managed,** no matter how established a garden is. Irrigation schedule management is the most effective way to save water.

Questions?

We're here to help make sure your project is a success!

If you have questions about your landscape conversion, please contact beyondlawn@eccdistrict.org or call (970) 236-1165.

Spring Maintenance



Spring is a crucial time for landscape maintenance in Eagle County, as the region transitions from the harsh winter months to the rejuvenating warmth of the summer season. Proper spring maintenance not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the landscape but also promotes the health and resilience of plants throughout the year. Irrigation maintenance is especially important in the spring to minimize water inefficiencies and ensure adequate coverage.

Spring Maintenance Tasks

- **Inspect and Repair Irrigation Systems:** Check for leaks, broken sprinkler heads, and ensure proper water coverage.
- **Clean Up Debris:** Remove fallen branches, leaves, and any debris accumulated over winter.
- **Prune Shrubs and Trees:** Trim dead or damaged branches to encourage healthy growth.
- **Aerate Lawns:** Alleviate soil compaction and improve air, water, and nutrient penetration.
- **Fertilize Grass and Plants:** Apply appropriate fertilizers to support vigorous growth.
- **Mulch Flower Beds:** Add a layer of mulch to retain moisture and suppress weeds.
- **Plant New Shrubs and Flowers:** Take advantage of the ideal planting conditions for new additions.
- **Weed Control:** Attack weeds early to minimize reoccurrence through the season.



Check out this Resource Central webinar, where you'll learn essential tips and techniques for transforming your garden into a sustainable oasis. Our experts will guide you through the process of preparing your landscape for efficient water use, ensuring a vibrant and eco-friendly environment all season long.

Run an Irrigation Test Cycle

Regular monthly maintenance of a home irrigation system is essential to ensure its efficiency and the longevity of the system as a whole. Key tasks include checking for leaks, ensuring sprinkler heads are not clogged or damaged, and adjusting the system settings according to seasonal weather changes. It's also important to clean filters and inspect valves to prevent any water waste or uneven coverage.

Step-by-step guide on how to run a test cycle:

- **Step 1:** Locate your irrigation system controller and set it to “Manual” mode.
- **Step 2:** Select the “Test Cycle” option if available, or manually set each zone to run.
- **Step 3:** Adjust the runtime to 2-3 minutes per zone to ensure a thorough inspection.
- **Step 4:** Begin the test cycle, monitoring each zone for proper water distribution.
- **Step 5:** Check for any leaks, broken sprinkler heads, or areas receiving insufficient or excessive water.
- **Step 6:** Make necessary adjustments or repairs to any problematic areas.
- **Step 7:** Reset your controller to its regular schedule once the test is complete.



To run a test cycle on a Hunter Pro-C, hold down the PRG button, select your starting station using the arrow buttons, set a run time using the (+/-) buttons, and wait 2 seconds. The controller will run all stations sequentially, allowing you to check for proper operation.

To run a test cycle on a Rain Bird controller (like the ESP-Me series), turn the dial to "Test All Stations" or "Manual Watering," adjust the time using (+) or (-) buttons (default is usually 2 minutes), and press and hold the Manual Start (or right arrow) button. Return the dial to AUTO to let the cycle run.



Irrigation Schedule Management

Managing the irrigation schedule is the single most effective way to conserve water in a home landscape.

- By utilizing the **seasonal adjust feature** (see below) on your irrigation system, you can automatically modify watering times to align with changing weather conditions, ensuring that your landscape receives just the right amount of water throughout the year.
- Employing a smart clock can enhance this efficiency by providing real-time data and adjustments based on local climate and weather conditions. It also gives you, your property manager, or your irrigation contractor remote access to be able to adjust quickly and easily from anywhere.
- It's important to adhere to a regular routine, being mindful of local water restrictions and guidelines to prevent overwatering.
- Regular maintenance of your irrigation system is essential to check for leaks or clogs, ensuring the efficient and targeted application of water, thus promoting a lush landscape while conserving this precious resource.

Programming irrigation controllers can initially seem daunting due to the technical specifications and confusing interface. Once you become familiar with the process and have learned to program or adjust a couple of times, it quickly becomes routine and intuitive, allowing you to efficiently manage your irrigation system with confidence.



Irrigation Guide

Check out the Beyond Lawn Irrigation Guide at beyondlawn.org for more information about how to make your irrigation system as efficient as possible.

Midsummer Maintenance

As midsummer arrives, landscape maintenance becomes crucial to keep gardens and outdoor spaces thriving under the hot sun. This time of year demands regular watering, mulching to protect against heat stress, and strategic pruning for healthy growth. Maintaining lawns, controlling pests, and deadheading flowers are essential tasks to get the landscape looking its best.

Midsummer Maintenance Tasks

- **Inspect Irrigation Systems:** Check for leaks, broken sprinklers, or misaligned heads to ensure efficient water use.
- **Mulch Flower Beds and Gardens:** If you haven't already, apply a layer of mulch to retain soil moisture, suppress weeds, and regulate soil temperature.
- **Mow Lawn Appropriately:** Set lawnmower blades higher to allow grass to shade the soil, reducing water loss and discouraging weed growth.
- **Prune Trees and Shrubs:** Trim dead or overgrown branches to encourage healthy growth.
- **Weed Regularly:** Remove weeds that compete with plants for water and nutrients.
- **Install Drip Irrigation:** Consider using drip irrigation systems for gardens and shrubs to deliver water directly to the roots.
- **Fertilize Sparingly:** Use slow-release fertilizers to provide nutrients without encouraging excessive growth and excess fertilizer runoff.
- **Inspect for Pests and Diseases:** Regularly check plants for signs of pests or diseases and address issues promptly to prevent spread.



Maintaining Native Grasses

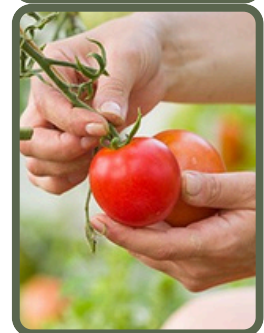
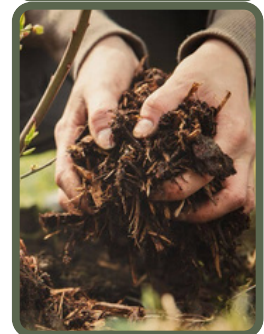
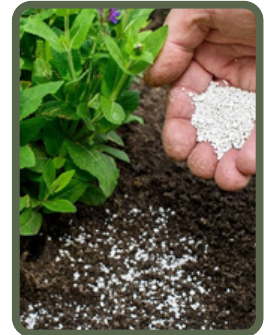
During dry summers, native areas typically go dormant, especially when mowed. Unmowed native grasses have better drought resistance and may retain some green color even during prolonged dry periods. To maintain greener native areas, apply 1-2 inches of water every 4-5 weeks, using soak cycles to avoid runoff. If mowing is necessary, use the highest setting and limit mowing to a midsummer and late-summer mow. Fertilize warm-season grasses once in July or August, and fertilize cool-season natives in September.

Late Summer Maintenance

As late summer rolls in, begin by deadheading spent blooms on flowers and shrubs to encourage new growth and prolong blooming periods. Pay attention to pest control, using natural repellents or barriers to protect your plants from late-season invaders. Lastly, plan on late summer and fall planting to fill gaps and take advantage of ideal establishment conditions.

Late Summer Maintenance Activities

- **Prune and Deadhead:** Trim back overgrown shrubs and remove dead flowers to encourage new growth and maintain a tidy appearance.
- **Weed Control:** Regularly remove weeds to prevent them from spreading and competing with your plants for nutrients.
- **Lawn Care:** Mow the lawn regularly, keeping the grass at an optimal height, and consider aerating your lawn to improve soil health.
- **Watering:** Adjust your watering schedule to accommodate changing weather patterns, ensuring plants receive adequate moisture.
- **Fertilization:** Apply a balanced fertilizer to promote healthy growth and prepare plants for the upcoming fall season.
- **Inspect for Pests:** Check plants for signs of pests or diseases and take appropriate action, such as using organic pest control methods.
- **Mulching:** Refresh mulch layers to retain soil moisture, suppress weeds, and regulate soil temperature.
- **Harvest Vegetables and Fruits:** Pick ripe produce regularly to encourage continued production and prevent spoilage.
- **Plan Fall Planting:** Start planning and preparing beds for fall planting by clearing debris and adding compost or soil amendments.
- **Tool Maintenance:** Clean and sharpen garden tools to ensure they are ready for use and prolong their lifespan.



Check out this Resource Central webinar for expert tips on nurturing perennials and optimizing their gardens during the late summer season. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, this webinar will provide valuable guidance for thriving, vibrant gardens.



Dividing Perennials



Splitting perennials is a cost-effective gardening technique that can lead to a more vibrant and healthy garden. By dividing plants, you can not only expand your garden without purchasing new material but also stimulate more prolific blooming and vigorous growth. This process helps rejuvenate older plants, allowing them to access more nutrients and space. **It's important to remember that not all perennials benefit from splitting.** Before digging up your plants, research their specific needs to ensure they will thrive after being divided.

Dividing perennials in late summer or early fall is an excellent gardening practice that promotes healthy plant growth and rejuvenation. During this time, the soil is still warm, which helps newly divided roots establish more quickly before the onset of winter.

To divide perennials, carefully dig up the plant, ensuring you retain as much of the root system as possible, and then gently separate it into smaller sections, each with a good number of roots and shoots. Replant these divisions at the same depth as the original plant, and water them thoroughly to help settle the soil and eliminate air pockets.



It's also beneficial to add a layer of mulch around the newly planted sections to retain moisture and protect the roots as they adjust to their new environment. Be mindful of spacing; giving each division enough room to grow will ensure they thrive and reach their full potential.

After dividing, monitor the plants for any signs of stress, such as wilting or discolored leaves, and provide extra care if needed. Regular watering, especially during dry spells, will support their recovery and encourage robust growth. With patience and attention, your perennials will flourish, adding beauty and vitality to your garden for years to come.

Fall Maintenance



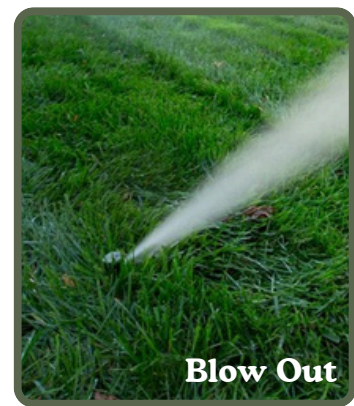
Fall provides an ideal opportunity to prepare landscapes for the upcoming winter months. This season involves more than just raking leaves; it is about ensuring that your garden and yard are well-maintained to flourish in the spring. By adopting sustainable practices, such as leaving some leaves on the ground, homeowners can support overwintering insects and contribute to a healthier ecosystem.



[Click here for the Winterizing Outdoor Spaces webinar presented by ECCD's Denyse Schrenker for Vail's Lunch With the Locals series.](#)

Fall Maintenance Activities:

- **Rake and collect leaves**, but leave some to serve as a habitat for insects. See “Leave the Leaves” below!
- **Prune dead, diseased, or broken branches** from trees and shrubs.
- **Aerate and fertilize the lawn** to encourage root development and mitigate against compaction.
- **Overseed lawns to fill in gaps** and have healthy, thick turf the following spring.
- **Drain and store hoses** to prevent freezing.
- **Inspect and maintain gutters and downspouts** to keep them flowing and free of leaf litter
- **Clean Up Garden Beds:** Remove dead plants, weeds, and other debris to be ready for spring
- **Prune Perennials:** Trim back select perennials to 6-8", if desired. See Fall Cutback section below.
- **Protect Delicate Plants:** Wrap or cover tender plants with burlap or frost cloth to shield them from harsh temperatures.
- **Winterize Irrigation Systems:** Blow out any remaining water from irrigation systems to avoid damage.
- **Plant Bulbs:** Plant spring-flowering bulbs like tulips and daffodils to ensure a vibrant spring garden.
- **Compost Leaves:** Collect fallen leaves to add to your compost pile or use them as mulch.
- **Protect Young Trees:** Use tree guards or fencing to protect young trees from rodents, deer and elk, and frost damage.
- **Check Tools and Equipment:** Clean and store garden tools properly, sharpening any blades and oiling metal parts to prevent rust.



Fall Cutbacks



Fall cutbacks are common practice for keeping the landscape clean and orderly over winter, and if done at the right time and as appropriate for the plant you're cutting back, it can benefit spring growth and overall plant health. Done too soon, too short, or to plants that should not be trimmed back, and it can be detrimental to the health of the plants and your landscape. Always use clean, sharp tools. Cutting just above buds will encourage healthy regrowth in the spring and help prevent disease and pests.



When cutting back perennials, it's crucial not to trim them too soon or too short, as this can hinder the plant's ability to draw energy from its leaves and stems to be stored for winter months. Cutting too close to the ground leaves the plant's crown more exposed to harsh weather conditions, increasing the risk of dieback. Leaving a bit more stem (at least 6"-8"!) can help provide a protective layer, and throwing some leaves on top provides another layer of insulation between the crown and the snow.

While it's not essential to cut back ornamental grasses every fall, doing so can help prevent their centers from rotting. Ornamental grasses can add texture and movement to the winter landscape, so consider leaving them standing until early spring, when they can be trimmed before new growth begins. If you choose to cut them back in the fall, aim to leave about one-third of the plant intact to protect the crown and roots. Remember to assess each plant's specific needs and adjust your care routine accordingly.



When planning your fall garden maintenance, it's important to know which perennials are evergreen or semi-evergreen to avoid cutting them back prematurely and risking damage. Evergreen perennials, such as hellebores and vinca, retain their foliage year-round. Identifying these plants will help ensure you don't cut them back so that they can provide color and interest year after year.

Leave the Leaves



As summer turns to autumn, it's tempting to tidy up our gardens and yards, but embracing a more natural approach by leaving some leaves, stems, and other overwintering habitat can offer a wealth of ecological benefits. This practice is crucial for supporting invertebrates and pollinators such as butterflies and bees, which rely on these materials for shelter and hibernation during the colder months. Decomposing plant matter enriches the soil, enhancing its fertility and structure, which in-turn promotes healthier plant growth come spring.

Check out this Resource Central webinar, where they explore the crucial role of leaving leaves toward supporting pollinator habitats during the colder months. Discover how embracing this simple practice can provide essential shelter and nourishment for beneficial insects, contributing to a thriving ecosystem at home and in your communities.



According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, **leaves and other yard debris account for more than 13 percent of the nation's solid waste—a whopping 33 million tons a year.** This organic matter decomposes in landfills, creating methane, which is an extraordinarily potent greenhouse gas. It also takes bags to hold it (use paper where possible!), and energy to transport it. Leaving the leaves helps build soils, enhance biodiversity, and reduce emissions.

Overwintering insects, especially pollinators, rely on hollow stems, leaf litter, and exposed soil to build their burrows in order to survive our harsh winters. Leaving stems, leaves, and small brush piles allows these insects to live to see another year!



In the spring, wait until soil temps are 50 degrees or more to ensure insects are no longer dormant!



Fall Sprinkler Blow-Outs

As fall approaches, it's crucial to properly winterize your in-ground home irrigation system to prevent damage from freezing temperatures. Start by scheduling your irrigation blow-out before the possibility of permanent snow. In the Eagle River Valley, this is usually in early to mid-October. Use an air compressor to blow out all the water from the pipes, ensuring no moisture remains that could freeze and cause ruptures.

If you winterize the system yourself, ensure you use the correct pressure setting to avoid damaging the system; too much pressure can harm pipes and valves. It's a good practice to insulate any above-ground components, like backflow preventers, to shield them from harsh winter conditions. Lastly, consider consulting with a professional if you're unsure, as they can ensure your system is safely and effectively winterized.

Fall is a good time to clean screens and filters to ensure that time in the spring is used for identifying and fixing problems. Ideally, spring maintenance is focused on fixing any issues that may have happened through the winter (like a broken head from a snow plow), and making sure heads are directed where they are supposed to water.

Landscape Timeline



- May** **Clear any winter debris and weed.** Fertilize lawn and garden beds to encourage growth. Amend soil as necessary and plant new perennials as temperatures rise and the soil becomes workable. Start a regular mowing schedule for cool season turfgrass.
- June** **Focus on watering deeply but infrequently to promote strong root systems.** Mulch garden beds to retain moisture and suppress weeds. Deadhead flowers to encourage continuous blooming. Monitor for pests and diseases, and treat as necessary. Remove plants that did not survive the winter. Weed as necessary.
- July** **As summer heats up, continue with regular watering, trim hedges and shrubs, and check for any signs of overgrowth that might need pruning.** Begin harvesting early vegetables and fruits. Weed as necessary.
- August** **Maintain watering and mowing schedules.** Begin planning for fall planting, like bulbs and cool-season vegetables. Keep up with weeding and deadheading.
- September** **With cooler temperatures, reduce watering frequency but continue to mow.** Plant perennials to give them sufficient time to root. Start cleaning up beds by removing spent plants and adding compost to enrich the soil.
- October** **Prepare the landscape for winter by raking leaves and removing debris.** Cut back perennials and divide overcrowded plants. Continue to water evergreens until the ground freezes to prevent winter desiccation. Protect young plants with mulch or covers if frost is expected.

Irrigation Timeline



May	<p>Spring Start-Up: Turn on the irrigation system and check for leaks or damage from winter. Inspect all sprinkler heads and clean or replace any that are clogged or broken.</p> <p>Controller Settings: Set the controller for spring watering needs, typically less frequent than summer.</p>
June	<p>Inspect and Adjust: Check for proper coverage and adjust sprinkler heads to ensure they are watering the intended areas and not sidewalks or driveways.</p> <p>Monitor Weather: Adjust watering based on rainfall to avoid overwatering.</p>
July	<p>Peak Season Check: Ensure the system handles increased demand during hotter months. Look for signs of stress in the landscape, such as dry patches.</p> <p>Deep Watering: Encourage deep root growth by watering less frequently but for longer durations.</p>
August	<p>Mid-Season Maintenance: Inspect the entire system for leaks or blockages. Clean filters and nozzles to maintain efficient flow.</p> <p>Adjust Schedule: As the temperature starts to drop slightly, begin reducing watering frequency if needed.</p>
September	<p>Prepare for Fall: Gradually reduce watering times as temperatures cool and days shorten. Start thinking about winterization preparations.</p> <p>Check System: Conduct a thorough system check to ensure everything is functioning optimally.</p>
October	<p>Winterization Preparation: Drain and blow out the irrigation system to prevent freeze damage. This is especially critical in colder climates.</p> <p>Final Inspection: Perform a final check to ensure all components are in good shape before shutting down for winter.</p>

Valve Box Maintenance



Valve boxes are protective enclosures that house and shield underground valves used in irrigation, ensuring they remain accessible for operation and maintenance.

When valve boxes aren't properly maintained or kept accessible, it can lead to several issues, such as difficulty in locating or operating the valves during emergencies, potential damage from debris or soil intrusion, and increased risk of system malfunctions or leaks that can result in costly repairs and service interruptions.

Keeping Valve Boxes Accessible

To keep valve boxes accessible, regularly trim back any overgrown turf that encroaches on the edges. Use a spade or edging tool to carefully remove the grass, ensuring that the box remains visible and easy to access for maintenance.

Additionally, consider installing a border around the box to prevent grass from growing back too quickly.



Non-Apparent Leaks and Water Loss

Valve boxes, typically installed underground, are crucial components for controlling water flow in irrigation and plumbing systems. However, they can develop small to medium-sized leaks that often go unnoticed on the surface. When these leaks occur upstream from the valves, they can result in continuous water loss, as the leaks persist even when water isn't actively flowing to a designated zone. This hidden issue underscores the importance of regular inspections to prevent water wastage and potential damage.

Non-Apparent Leaks and Water Loss

Maintaining valve boxes in mulched areas requires regular inspection to ensure they remain visible and accessible. Over time, mulch can accumulate and obscure the boxes, making them difficult to locate when needed. This proactive approach can save time and effort in future maintenance or emergencies.



Weeds



Controlling weeds in the home landscape can be a persistent challenge, as they compete for nutrients, water, and sunlight, potentially stifling the growth of cultivated plants. Implementing strategies such as dense planting can create a natural barrier that suppresses weed growth by minimizing the available space for them to thrive. Drip irrigation is another effective technique, as it delivers water directly to the roots of plants, reducing moisture on the soil surface where weeds often germinate. Recognizing and removing noxious weeds promptly is crucial, as these aggressive invaders can quickly overtake a garden if left unchecked. Regular weeding is essential to prevent weed seeds from maturing and spreading, ensuring a healthy and vibrant landscape that enhances the beauty and value of your home environment.

Annual and Biennial Weeds

Annual weeds complete their life cycle—germinating, flowering, setting seed, and dying—within a year. They often emerge in disturbed soil, hindering the establishment of desired plants. Biennial weeds, on the other hand, take two years to complete their life cycle, growing without flowering in the first year and producing a flowering stalk in the second. Both annual and biennial weeds reproduce solely by seed, such as cheatgrass (annual) and many thistles (biennial). The key to controlling them is preventing seed production.



Perennial Weeds

Perennial weeds live for three or more years. Simple perennials, like dandelions, grow singly with a large taproot and reproduce only by seed. Spreading perennials, such as bindweed, start from seed but spread vegetatively once mature, reproducing both by seed and asexually, making them particularly difficult to control. Effective management involves preventing seed production and completely removing or killing the entire plant, both above and below ground.



Noxious Weed Watch



[Click here for CO Noxious Weed List & Information](#)

Noxious weeds are invasive plants that are harmful to the environment, agriculture, or public health. Recognizing and eliminating these weeds early is crucial, as they can quickly spread and outcompete native flora, causing significant ecological and economic damage. Tackling noxious weeds effectively requires a community-based approach because these plants do not recognize property boundaries and can easily spread across large areas. Collaborative efforts help ensure consistent management practices, increase public awareness, and pool resources for more effective eradication. By working together, communities can better protect their landscapes and preserve biodiversity.

While noxious weeds like houndstongue, tansy, and Russian olives can indeed appear charismatic with their striking flowers and ability to thrive in challenging environments, their unchecked presence poses significant threats to local landscapes and biodiversity. These invasive species often outcompete native flora for resources, leading to reduced plant diversity and ecosystem imbalance. Additionally, they can alter soil chemistry and hydrology, further disadvantaging native species. Though their resilience and beauty may be alluring, managing and controlling their spread is crucial for preserving the ecological health and diversity of our natural surroundings.



ECCD Noxious Weed Cost Share Program



Eagle County Conservation District has a 50/50 cost-share program for noxious weed mitigation. A technician will assess the site and give you a prescriptive plan to implement. Visit the [ECCD website](#) for more information.



Common Garden Weeds



Common Mallow



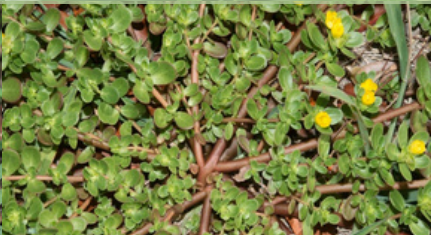
Prickly Lettuce



Lambs Quarters



Spotted Spurge



Purslane



Dandelions



Broadleaf Plantain



Prostrate Knotweed



Shepard's Purse



Burdock



Yellow Clover



Quackgrass



Fireweed



Pineappleweed



Henbit

Weed Control Methods



Weed control is an imperative for maintaining healthy plants and landscapes.

Common methods for managing unwanted plants include mechanical, chemical, and cultural approaches. Mechanical weed control involves physical removal, such as hand-pulling or using tools to disrupt weed growth. Chemical control employs herbicides that target specific weed species, offering a more efficient solution for large areas. Lastly, cultural practices, such as mulching, dense planting, minimizing disturbance, and drip irrigation create environments less conducive to weed proliferation. Each method has its advantages and drawbacks, and a combination of these strategies is most often employed for effective weed management.



Mechanical weed control involves the physical removal or disruption of weeds using tools or machinery, rather than relying on chemical herbicides. This method can include techniques such as mowing, hoeing, tilling, or using specialized equipment like weed pullers or flamers. Mechanical control is favored in smaller and more populated areas, as there are no additional environmental impacts that come from chemical weed control.

Chemical weed control involves the use of herbicides to manage unwanted plants. These substances work by targeting specific biological processes in weeds, inhibiting their growth or killing them outright, which helps promote the health and productivity of crops or landscapes. **It is important to apply herbicides responsibly to minimize environmental impact and prevent harm to non-target plants, animals, and humans.**



Horticultural vinegar (30%) is a non-selective, non-toxic solution to pesky weeds and a great alternative to other herbicides. It can be bought at your local hardware store or garden center.

Cultural weed control methods include applying mulch as a physical barrier to limit weed germination, using drip irrigation to create less area conducive to seeds germinating and growing successfully, maintaining proper plant spacing and soil health, and minimizing disturbance so as to not create spaces for weeds, which tend to capitalize on soil disturbances, to seed and take root.

Pests & Disease



Managing pests and diseases in the home landscape requires a balanced approach that emphasizes prevention, monitoring, and, if necessary, control. Start by cultivating healthy plants through proper selection, placement, and care, as strong plants are more resilient to pests and diseases.

Natural methods, like planting diverse landscapes, encouraging beneficial insects, maintaining soil and plant health, and using organic treatments, can effectively manage many problems without resorting to other control methods. When chemical interventions are necessary, choose targeted, environmentally-friendly options where possible, and follow all safety guidelines to protect your household, your plants, and the surrounding ecosystem.



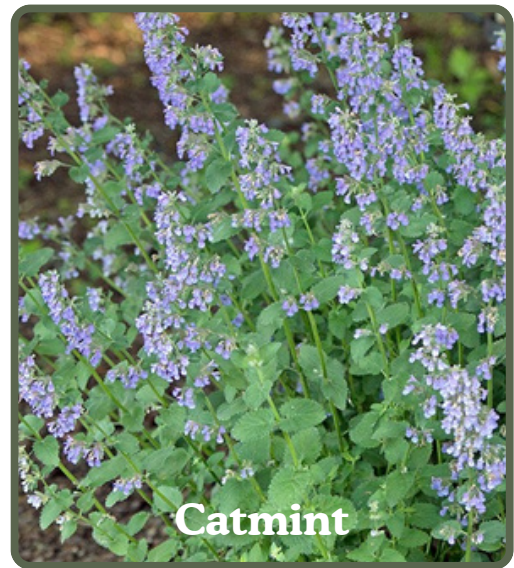
When pests and diseases occur despite your best preventative efforts, it's important to act quickly and strategically. First, accurately identify the pest or disease to tailor your response. Consider integrating methods like introducing beneficial insects or using organic pesticides to minimize environmental impact. Regularly monitor affected areas to assess the effectiveness of your interventions and make adjustments as needed. Enhance plant resilience by ensuring proper nutrition and care, which can help plants fend off future attacks. If the problem persists, consulting with ECCD or CSU extension service or a pest management professional can provide valuable insights and solutions.

Pest Repellent Strategies



Effective pest repellent strategies in the home landscape begin with maintaining a healthy ecosystem that naturally deters unwanted visitors. Start by incorporating a variety of plants that interrupt the spread of pests and disease between alike plants. Companion planting can also help repel pests naturally, by pairing unpalatable or repellent plants next to those frequently victim to pests and disease. Keeping your garden clean by removing debris and regularly trimming plants reduces the incidence of rot and fungi and increases air circulation near the ground. For a more targeted approach, consider using natural repellents like neem oil or diatomaceous earth, which are safe for plants and humans but deter harmful insects.

Planting species with natural defensive compounds, such as mints and allium species like garlic and onions, can be an effective strategy for deterring pests in your garden. These plants release potent scents and chemicals that many insects and animals find unappealing, thus protecting themselves and their neighboring plants. The aromatic oils in mint, for example, can repel ants and aphids, while the sulfur compounds in alliums act as a natural deterrent for a variety of pests, including beetles and rabbits. Incorporating these plants into your garden not only adds diversity but also enhances the overall health and resilience of your plant community.



Catmint

Minty deer repellants, neem oil, and cayenne pepper are naturally derived products that repel pests. Using these natural solutions can help maintain a garden that's both productive and environmentally friendly.



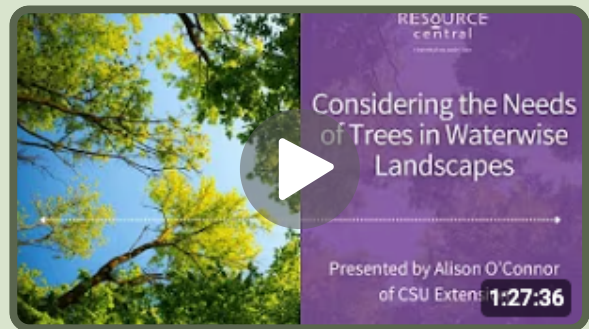
This Resource Central webinar delves into garden insect dynamics, helping you identify beneficial insects versus potential pests, and provide expert strategies for developing a sustainable and ecologically balanced garden ecosystem. Ideal for horticulturists seeking to optimize their garden environments!

Tree Health



Assessing and diagnosing issues with trees in your landscape begins with regular inspections to identify signs of distress, such as discolored leaves, unusual growth patterns, or the presence of pests and diseases. To maintain tree health, it's important to practice proper watering, mulching, and pruning techniques, while ensuring the soil is rich and well-drained. Watch out for signs of root damage, nutrient deficiencies, and environmental stressors like drought or pollution, and consider consulting an arborist for a professional evaluation and tailored care strategies.

This Resource Central webinar explores the important role trees play in sustainable landscaping. The session provides practical tips on selecting tree species suited for our environment, ensuring their health and longevity without compromising on water use efficiency.



When using rock mulch around trees, it's important to keep it away from the root flare, as rocks can absorb and radiate heat, potentially raising soil temperatures and stressing the tree. This excess heat can hinder the roots' ability to absorb water and nutrients effectively. In contrast, organic mulches, such as wood chips or bark, provide a more beneficial environment by moderating soil temperature and retaining moisture.

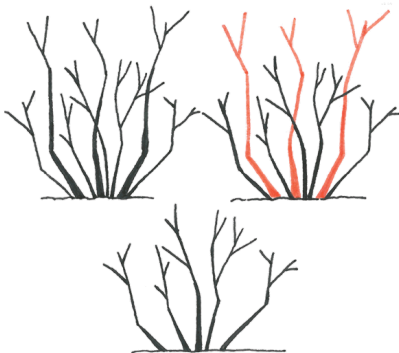
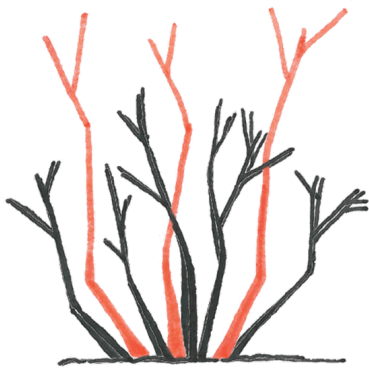
Utilizing pheromone tags is an innovative strategy for safeguarding trees against harmful insect infestations. These tags release synthetic pheromones that mimic the natural signals used by insects, effectively disrupting their mating cycles or deterring them from approaching trees. By preventing the establishment of damaging insect populations, pheromone tags help maintain the health and vitality of trees without relying on chemical pesticides.



Pruning Basics



Pruning or trimming a tree or shrub is an essential gardening task that promotes healthy growth, mitigates fire danger, and enhances the landscape's aesthetic appeal. Proper pruning on most plants encourages and directs growth. Done improperly, and it can reduce the health of the plant or make it susceptible to disease. Always research the best time of the year to prune your tree or shrub.

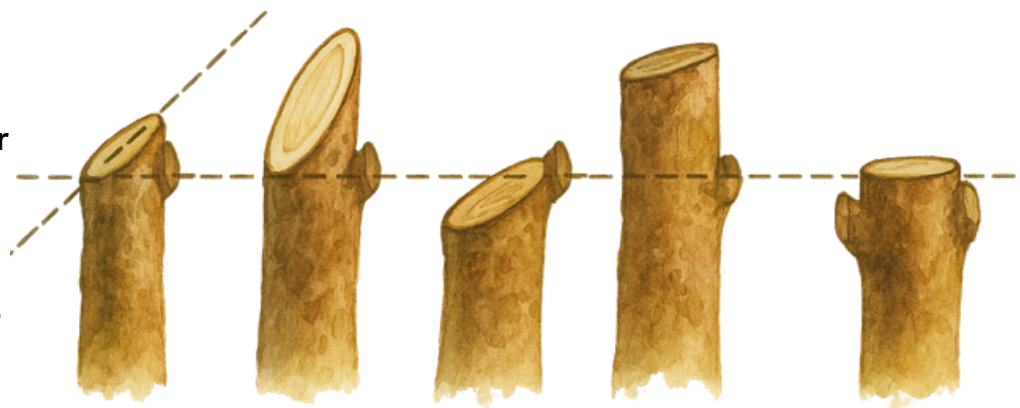


Remove 1/3 of the oldest, heaviest canes at the ground line

1. To properly prune, begin by identifying the right time for the species you are working with, as some trees and shrubs should be pruned in late winter while others fare better with a late summer trim.
2. Use clean, sharp tools such as pruning shears or saws to make precise cuts. Start by removing any dead, diseased, or damaged branches, cutting back to the main stem or a healthy outward-facing bud.
3. For shaping, focus on maintaining the plant's natural form by selectively thinning out branches to improve air circulation and light penetration. For shrubs, thin by reducing some of the oldest, largest stems. Cut from the base.
4. Next, shape the plant by pruning selectively at the ends of some of the other stems. See below for proper technique.
5. Avoid cutting more than one-third of the plant at a time to prevent stress. Always make cuts at a slight angle just above a bud or branch junction to promote healing and reduce the risk of disease.

Pruning Cuts Relative to Stem Buds

Most plants have either **opposite or alternate** buds. Pay attention to which kind your plant has to make sure you prune appropriately, and always prune above the buds.



45° Angle
Good Cut

Too
Angular

Too Low

Too High

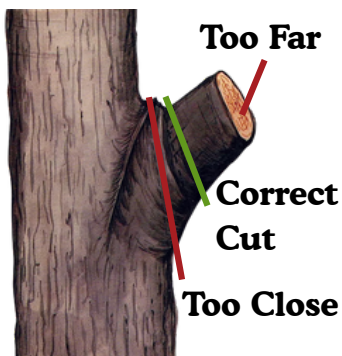
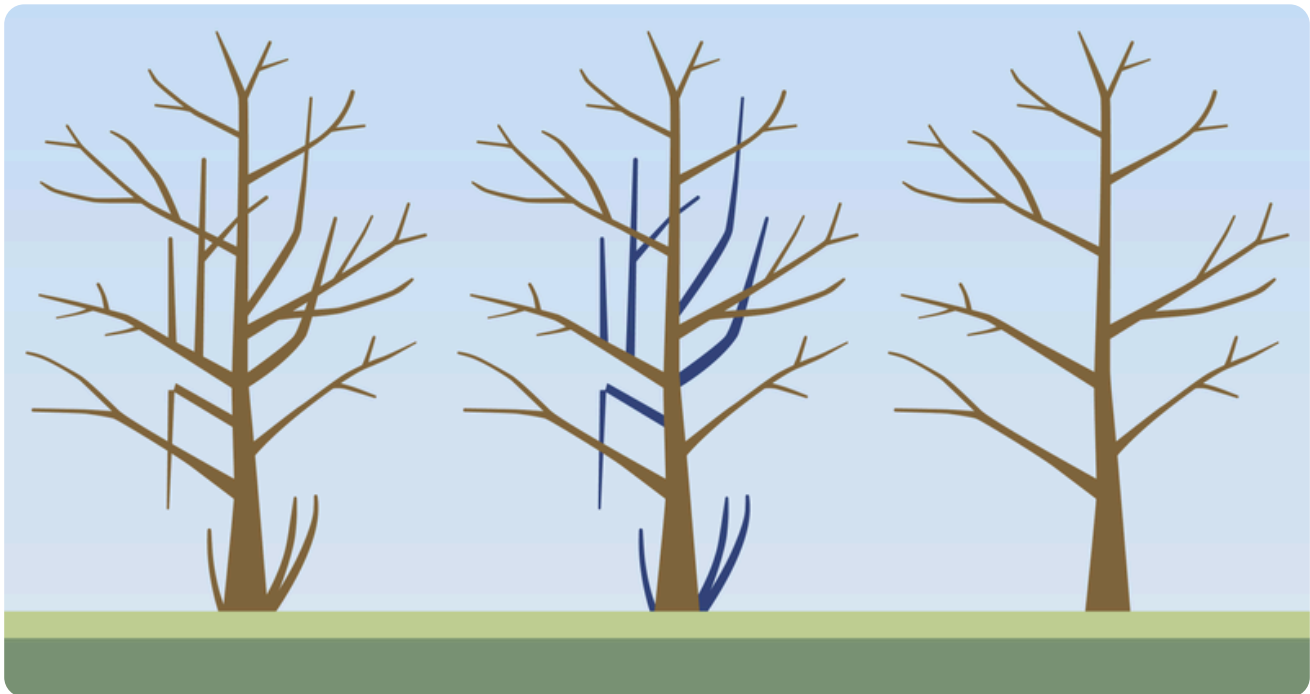
Opposite Buds
Good Cut

Tree Limbing



Properly limbing a tree enhances its aesthetic appeal by creating a balanced shape and allowing more sunlight and air to circulate through its branches, which promotes healthy growth. Conversely, improper limbing can leave the tree looking unsightly and unbalanced, while also opening up wounds that make it vulnerable to pests and diseases.

How to Limb a Tree



To limb a tree, first assess and identify dead, damaged, or crossing branches for removal. Use sharp tools to make clean cuts just outside the branch collar. For larger limbs, cut in sections: start with an undercut a few inches from the trunk, then make a top cut slightly further out. Wear protective gear and ensure solid footing throughout the process.



Once you've removed the unwanted branches, step back and evaluate the tree's overall shape. Aim for a symmetrical appearance that maintains the tree's natural form. Remember to remove no more than 25% of the tree's foliage in a single season to prevent stress. Regular maintenance and monitoring will help catch any issues early, ensuring the tree remains healthy and continues to thrive.

Winterizing Checklist



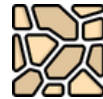
Has the irrigation system been blown out?



Have you marked late emerging perennials?



Is the controller turned to "off"?



Are hard edges marked for snow removal?



Is the backflow covered or insulated?



Are trees and shrubs protected?



Are all hoses drained and disconnected?



Are tools cleaned and stored for spring?



Are hose bibs covered or insulated?



Are valve boxes clean and accessible?



Are batteries removed from equipment?



Have non-hardy annuals been removed?



Have trees and shrubs had a late-season water?



Have you left some leaves for overwintering?



Have the gutters been cleaned?



Have you left some seedheads?



Are downspouts clear of leaves and debris?



Is lawn furniture stored for the winter?



Have you noted issues to address in the spring?



Are pots and containers stored appropriately?