

Landscaping tips for your home

We all know that it takes more than April showers to bring May flowers into your yard. Building and maintaining a beautiful outdoor landscape is the result of long hours, hard work and a green thumb. Before you begin to create this year's garden oasis, make sure you've given some thought to protecting your home from the unintended water penetration that can result from poorly planned landscaping. This could not only have an impact on your home and what's in it, but it could also jeopardize your new home warranty.

In Ontario, most new homes come with a seven-year warranty that covers certain defects in workmanship, violations of the Ontario Building Code and major structural damage. The warranty is provided by your builder and backed by Taron. As the homeowner, it is your responsibility to take care of your home, and this includes not altering any grading your builder has in place to protect it from water penetration. If your landscaping plans call for any changes to the slope around your

home, this could lead to poor surface drainage, ponding, flooding, basement dampness, or foundation settlement - all of which could result in damage that may not be covered under your new home warranty.

So before you start to making any plans that could change any of the drainage systems on your property, including planting flowers, installing a pool, a deck, or even a second driveway, be sure it won't cause water to accumulate at or near your home's foundation.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when planning your landscaping this season:

- Make sure the land slopes away from your house so water does not accumulate near the foundation of your home.
- Extend downspouts so water flows away from the house and does not collect next to the basement walls and windows.
- Ensure surface drainage is directed away from window wells and exterior stairwells.
- Don't cover up exterior weep-



ing holes. These allow water inside a home to move outside and evaporate. Raising the grade above weeping holes could only allow water to back up and weaken your foundation. It could also encourage insects or small animals to enter your home.

Lot grading requirements vary in different municipalities. So before making changes to your builder's grading, check with your local building department to understand what the requirements are that apply to your home.

For more information on your home warranty visit www.taron.com.

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How to plant and rake without the ache

Winter may take a toll on your garden, but spring definitely takes a toll on the gardener. The hours spent perfecting our lawns for summer can really put a strain on our bodies. Gardening season and back pain often go hand in hand, but positioning your body correctly reduces the strain on muscles and joints. These expert tips will help you focus on planting a beautiful garden and avoid being planted on the couch with back pain.

Alternate your tasks. Switch between heavy chores such as digging and lighter, less physically demanding tasks such as planting.

Do the "scissors" when you rake. Stand with one leg forward and one leg back when you rake. Switch legs and hands every few minutes.

Kneel to plant and weed. Constant bending can put strain on your back, neck, leg muscles and joints, so kneeling is recommend-

ed. Use kneepads or a kneeling mat with handles to minimize the amount of bending required, and to make kneeling more comfortable. Keep your back straight.

Change positions frequently. Make a point of changing positions every 10 to 15 minutes. Move from kneeling to standing, from planting to digging.

Pace Yourself. A minimum of three brief breaks each hour is recommended. Take a few moments to move around, stretch your muscles, have a drink or simply sit and relax. Spread the work over several days - you will still achieve the same great results.

A chiropractor can help guide you through more exercises and advice on how to get back to doing the things you love to do. Find out more at www.chiropractic.on.ca.

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