

The focal point of the yard makes small yards look bigger

By LISA CARTWRIGHT
Advertising Features

When trying to create a small yard, it's important to create a master plan, keep the design simple and to scale. I suggest you keep things simple and plan the whole thing before you go ahead," said James Squair, a design consultant with Parlane Ltd. in Stouffville.

The following are some tips from Squair to maximize your yard space.

Where space is limited, the design becomes very important. Creating a master plan allows you to solve problems on paper rather than making expensive mistakes on your

yard. Keep a small space simple. Try to decide on the one or two features (water, a plant, a garden) that are the most important to you and incorporate those into the design.

When there is no room to waste, make sure you can access your yard as quickly as possible.

Don't build a deck at a level that leaves you perched above the rest of your yard. Use an attractive stairway to reach the ground and pull you into your yard faster.



By developing a master plan, you can use your small backyard for a variety of things.

✓ Create the illusion of a larger space by planning a focal point that draws your eye to the end of the property.

An interesting shrub, a statue or a small bench can catch your interest and force you to look across the whole space.

Flower, Locust, Linden, Chinese Elm and Crabapple trees grow slowly and won't reach 60 feet in height.

Maples quickly overwhelm a small space because they grow very large, very quickly.

✓ Enjoy the intimacy of a small space.

A 20 by 30 lot will never feel like half an acre, but you can enjoy the space by creating an oasis that enhances and celebrates the feeling of enclosure that a small lot affords.

And the backyard doesn't have to be finished all at once. As long as a master plan has been drawn, people can complete their design in phases, said Squair.

Nitrogen brings back color of yard

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The snow is almost the gone, the sun is starting to get stronger and your yard is brown - spring is here and it's time to get your lawn back to its summer glory.

The most important thing is to pick up any debris (like sticks) and give your lawn a hard raking to get rid of any snow mold that has formed, said Nick Zielonko, owner of the CUTTING EDGE Lawn Care and Landscaping.

A mixture of soil and seed should be put in dead areas of your yard. If you put down seed alone, you'll only be feeding the birds.

Snow mold is the flattened-down, brown grass that you see throughout your yard. It's caused by either the weight of snow (or the leaves you didn't rake last fall), he said.

"For a nicer looking lawn, you should add new soil and seed," said Zielonko.

Zielonko suggested a mixture of topsoil or peat loam (which has virtually no weeds in it and retains three times its weight in moisture) and a perennial rye seed mix.

Seeds mixed with soil have a higher germination rate than seeds alone. (Seeds alone germinate at a 10 to 15 per cent rate, with 10 per cent going to feed the birds,) he said.

Shade seeds should be used when planting in shady areas.

Seeds should be planted when temperatures (both day and night) are above zero. Seeds will not grow if they freeze.

You should fertilize your lawn - using fertilizers with a high nitrogen content (the first number of three) - the first week of May (or later if the snow isn't gone by then).

"It (nitrogen) brings back the color to your yard."

By the second weekend in May, your lawn should be long enough to cut.

And since your lawnmower has been sitting all winter, it is a good idea to get it ready for spring as well, he said.

"You should sharpen your blades three times a year. If the blade is not sharp ... (your lawn will have a) of brown haze across it."

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