

# GARDEN MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES

## The eight garden maintenance procedures are

- Pruning
- Weeding
- Watering
- Fertilising
- Mulching
- Lawn Mowing and Edging
- Pest and Disease Control
- General Garden Clean Up

## Pruning

Pruning encourages new growth and removes unsightly dead wood or damaged limbs. These dead limbs also tax much needed nutrients from healthy limbs and foliage. Tip pruning is the removal of the top 1-2cm of new growth to promote extra growth and encourage the shrub to form a more dense habit. Always be careful not to damage limbs and cause disease.

## Weeding

A weed is any unwanted plant growth in the garden. Control methods with weeding will vary with the type of weeds, the time of year and the size of the weed problem. There are four basic methods employed in weed control:

**Manual:** physical removal of weeds by hand - pulling, digging or cultivation.

**Exclusion:** maintenance of dense clumps of desirable plants that will successfully compete with weeds by blocking out sunlight and robbing them of water and nutrients.

**Chemical:** application of chemicals that can prevent or stop growth of weeds through toxic activity in weeds or soil.

**Biological:** use of specific insects or diseases to control weeds.

## Watering

There are several factors to consider before you develop a watering schedule:

- Distribution of water
- Micro Climate
- Type of plants
- Soil type

## Fertilising

Most trees and shrubs require only moderately fertile soil. Turf and flowers are more demanding however and usually require greater amounts of added nutrients. Generally a soil test is required to check fertility levels periodically. There are no strict rules to follow when planning a fertilising program, but usually the best time to fertilise is when the plants are in vigorous growth or at planting time.

## Mulching

Mulching is one of the most important garden maintenance procedures to be carried out in your garden maintenance program. Mulch should be applied a minimum of 100mm thick initially and then topped up once every year to a minimum depth of 50mm

### **Mulching is used for:**

the prevention of weeds

aesthetic value

retain moisture

add nutrients to soil

temperature insulation

increase soil micro organisms

The range of mulches varies greatly, depending mainly on cost, personal taste, the situation where it is used and the availability.

Popular mulches used: pine bark, straw, hoop fines, compost, hoop pine pieces, bagasse, tea tree, woodchip, river stone, forest mulch

## Lawn Mowing and edging

Unfortunately, mowing grass is such a common practice that it becomes routine. Since mowing is usually the most costly item in a landscape maintenance budget, small changes can result in significant savings with little sacrifice in turf quality. Some of these are cutting height, frequency and clipping removal.

### Cutting height

The height of the cut depends on the turf area and its uses. As a rule, low cut turf requires more care than high cut turf:

golf course greens and lawn bowls greens are cut very short, between 3-6mm.

recreational parks are generally cut around 15-20mm.

home lawns are mowed at the persons preferred height which is normally 10-15mm.

### Mowing frequency

This is best determined by the growth rate and time of year. During early and late periods of the growing season mowing may only be necessary every 2-3 weeks. During periods of maximum growth (Spring, Summer) it may be necessary twice a week, ideally once a week would be preferable depending on the area.

### Clipping removal

The pros and cons of clipping removal have long been debated. When left to decay on the lawn it can make use of the nutrients and water it contains. The labour and expense involved in the removal of clippings is great and clipping removal can significantly decrease soil nutrients available for plant growth. On the other hand clippings can increase thatching of lawns and they can also be unsightly and messy. There are mulching mowers that chop clippings into small pieces so that they rapidly disappear into the turf canopy, however these do not work well when the turf is tall or wet. Lawn and Garden

### Edging

Edging can be done by hand, whipper snipper or a motorised edger with whipper snippers being the most commonly used. The results are satisfactory but sometimes tend to be a bit jagged where as a motorised edger will give the lawn a professional and manicured look with the minimum amount of time and effort. A neat straight edge is required for a motorised edger due to the vertical rotation of

the blades which will be blunted very quickly if the edge, in particular concrete edge, has jagged pieces etc. In this case a whipper snipper would be best suited.

## **Pest and Disease control**

Pest control maintenance is very important for plant health to keep plants free of pests and diseases and keep the garden looking healthy at all times of the year. This is achieved by planting correctly, fertilising, preparing soil well, position plants properly, and removing weeds. Adopt a sensible and informed approach to using chemical, biological and cultural control methods. Integrated pest management principles are very helpful to use.

## **General garden clean up**

General clean up is carried out after you have finished all the maintenance tasks for the day and is vitally important in your garden maintenance program. It creates the final product where leaves are raked, paths swept or blown, rubbish removed, gutters cleaned, mulch raked over, pools and ponds cleaned and a general inspection of your property to ensure it is looking great. It also helps in the eradication of weeds, pests and diseases in the garden by cleaning up infected areas and throwing the clippings etc in the bin.