

Post-winter garden prep

Lawns and gardens can bear the brunt of winter weather and are often in need of tender loving care by the time spring arrives.

Preparing a garden for spring and summer involves assessing any damage that harsh weather might have caused. As temperatures climb,

gardeners can heed the following post-winter garden preparation tips in an effort to ensure some successful gardening in the months ahead.

exposed to the sun during spring and summer. Moving plants that are not thriving prior to the start of spring gardening season may be just what gardens need to flourish in the coming weeks.

Spring gardening season is right around the corner, so now is an ideal time to prepare gardens for the warmer seasons ahead.

Central Prairie Coop Farm Store: it's not just for farmers

By RYAN CARLSON

The Central Prairie Coop Farm Store has many products to suit all consumer needs.

While many may think of it as a traditional farm store, in reality it's products are also for the general public. These products include everything from garden items to barbecue pellets and even clothing. "We try to fit our consumer's needs. We're not just for farmers and you don't have to be a co-op member to shop here," said Manager David Lockhart.

On the lawn and garden side of the business, the farm store carries many fertilizers and pesticides. The store has several varieties of grass seed and grass seed planting machines available for rent. For those who want to remove thatch from their yards, power rakes are also available for rent.

Staff are always available to answer questions customers have about lawn and garden related topics. "If there's something we don't know we can ask our agronomists."

This year the store decided to add plans to their inventory. As of 2018 Central Prairie's Sterling farm store location will be the only dealer of Bonnie plants between Hutchinson and Great Bend.

There are various other products carried at the store. On the clothing side everything from boots to jeans are stocked. If there is a size a customer is looking for that's not in stock, the farm store can order it in.

For those planning on barbecuing, the Central Prairie Co-op Farm Store is a one-stop shop for many grill items. The store offers a variety of wood pellets and has the ability to refill propane tanks.

The store hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturday.

- Assess the damage. Even if winter was mild, gardens might still have suffered some damage. Inspect garden beds and any fencing or barriers designed to keep wildlife from getting into the garden. Before planting anew, fix any damage that Mother Nature or local wildlife might have caused over the past several months.

- Clear debris. Garden beds and surrounding landscapes that survived winter without being damaged might still be littered with debris. Remove fallen leaves, branches and even litter that blew about on windy winter days before planting season. Make sure to discard any debris effectively so it does not find its way back into the garden.

- Turn the greenhouse into a clean house. Spring cleaning is not just for the interior of a home. Cleaning a greenhouse in advance of spring can help gardeners evict any overwintering pests that can threaten plant life once spring gardening season arrives. A thorough cleaning, which should include cleaning the inside of greenhouse glass and washing flower pots and plant trays, also can prevent plant diseases from surviving into spring.

- Check for pests. Speak with a local gardening professional to determine if there are any local pests to look out for and how to recognize and remove these pests from gardens. Pests may hibernate in the soil over the winter, and such unwelcome visitors can make it difficult for gardens to thrive come spring and summer.

- Assess plant location. If plants, flowers or gardens have struggled in recent years or never grew especially vibrant, then gardeners may want to assess the location of their plant life before spring gardening season begins. Some plants may not be getting enough sunlight in certain locations on a property, while others might be over-

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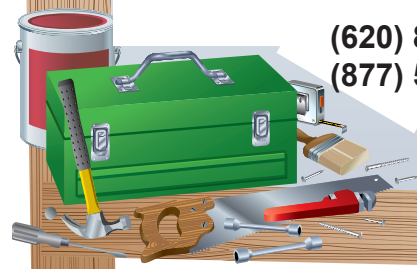
Watering a lawn can do more harm than good if the lawn is not watered correctly. Excessive watering is a waste of water and can cost homeowners money while harming the environment at the same time. Water that is not absorbed by the lawn can result in runoff, which causes nitrogen in the grass, any fertilizer that was applied and chemicals in the water itself to run into gutters and eventually pollute streams, rivers and oceans. In addition, grass needs oxygen in the soil to grow properly. But when a lawn is overwatered, the oxygen between the soil particles is pushed out, depriving roots of the oxygen they need to grow in strong. This leads to shallow root systems, which make a lawn more susceptible to stress, disease and insect infestation. But overwatering can also be unsightly, as lawns that are overwatered tend to have more weeds, robbing even the greenest of lawns of its aesthetic appeal.

Knock some items off of your spring to-do list!



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