



# BETTER ENVIRONMENTS

You'll Value our Views



JULY 2009

## BENEFITS OF AERATING YOUR LAWN

A healthy root system is a must for an attractive lawn. Oxygen in the soil is vital for healthy roots. Root growth is inhibited by clay and compacted soils because of a restricted oxygen supply. Aerating improves rooting and problem soils by allowing air into the soil. An aerator does this job mechanically without destroying the turf.

Healthy roots are necessary for healthy lawns. Roots make up 90 percent of the grass plant. Roots take in oxygen and give off carbon dioxide. Restricted air movement into the soil reduces health and vigor of the turf. Aerating equipment mechanically improves the movement of atmospheric air into the soil and carbon dioxide out of the soil.

Lawn problems improved by aerating include thatch, poor drainage, heavy traffic, walking, playing and compaction caused by heavy equipment.

Some benefits of aeration are listed below:

- Loosens compacted soil
- Breaks-up and/or removes thatch
- Improves water infiltration
- Improves nutrient infiltration
- Increases oxygen supply to roots
- Releases carbon dioxide
- Encourages new, deeper root growth

Core aerating or vertical mowing for cool-season grasses such as bluegrass, fescue and ryegrass should be done in March, April or September. Bermuda grass, buffalo grass, zoysiagrass and other warm-season grasses should be aerated late May through July. Spiking can be done anytime. Spiking is the easiest and least expensive aeration method and is done by suing a solid tine or a metal spike and putting

an angular hole in the ground. Using this method, the turf heals quicker than with core aeration because no soil is being removed. However, the effects of the solid tine method are short term. Another problem is that the soil is pushed to the sides of the hole compacting the area again.

How often to aerate depends on the type of soil and the amount of use. Bermuda grass, buffalo grass and zoysia require more aeration than bluegrass or fescue to keep the thatch in check. Clay soils with a lot of use need to be aerated twice a year.

Aeration is an important part of a lawn care program. For best results, it should be incorporated with a total lawn maintenance program. There are no physical signs to indicate that a lawn needs aerating. Spending time on maintenance can make the difference in having to replant a lawn or not.

([www.aeratingyourlawn.com](http://www.aeratingyourlawn.com))

### South Coast Cactus & Succulent Society Lecture July 12, 2009 1-4 p.m.

With the focus on being water-wise in your garden, it is timely that the topic of the Cactus & Succulent Society's Lecture will focus on water conservation and using succulents in landscape. Joe Clements, co-author of "Dry Climate Gardening" will be the key speaker. Educated at Whittier College and the University of Southern California, Clements received a degree in Geology. He was employed by the Huntington Botanical Gardens as Curator of the Desert Gardens for 22 years, and for the last five years he has been the director of the Rodman Arboretum at Pitzer College. Clements has served on the CSSA board for more than 30 years since 1972. He has been president of the San Gabriel Cactus and Succulent Society several times and cochairman of that society's Study Group. For long-standing service in the Cactus and Succulent Society of America, Clements has received the CSSA's Superior Service Award. Clements' presentation is about the "Landscaping with Dry Climate Plants for Southern California Gardens." County Gardener, Pedra Furmall, will also be giving a talk about the Cactus & Succulent Garden and the Desert Garden Extension.

### BE AWARE OF YOUR WATER RESTRICTIONS

In the city of Rolling Hills Estates, lawns shall not be watered between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. All water fountains must use re-circulated or recycled water. Irrigation of lawns or landscaped areas to the point where excess water runs into the street or storm drains is prohibited. Leaks and other malfunctions in plumbing must be fixed immediately, but no later than 72 hours after notification by the City. Vehicles, sidewalks, driveways, patios and other areas may only be cleaned or washed using a hand-held bucket or hose equipped with a positive action quick-release shut-off nozzle. The city of Rolling Hills Estates will continue to monitor drought conditions and make any necessary adjustments to programs in order to assure a sustainable water supply for the community.

### Our Drawing Winner

Our quarterly random drawing winner is Edith Catlin. She will receive \$25 off her monthly maintenance bill.

Thanks to all of you who completed our maintenance evaluation, and please continue to submit them!



*Have a Happy and Safe 4th of July Holiday Weekend!*

Nothing tastes better than vegetables picked fresh from your own garden. There's a certain satisfaction to serving and eating food that you have grown and harvested yourself. Although they typically demand a good bit of space, vegetables can even be grown in window boxes.

Advance planning of your garden is a must as there are many factors that can affect the success and manageability of your vegetable garden as well as your enjoyment of it.

The traditional method of vegetable garden design was to plant long, orderly rows. Most home gardeners now opt for planting in beds rather than rows. This method allows you to concentrate your compost on the area where the plants are growing rather than wasting it on the paths between the rows. Walking between the rows also ruins the soil structure, so beds are really a better way to go. The beds do need to be small enough so that you can easily reach in to weed and harvest all the plants without stepping on the bed itself. Also, if you raise your beds about 8 to 12 inches, you will have improved drainage and the soil will stay warmer in colder weather, such as early spring.

Another popular style is potager, which mixes flowers in together with herbs and vegetables in an ornamental fashion so that the garden is both functional and aesthetically pleasing. Many vegetables also thrive in containers, so you don't even need a garden in order to get those garden-fresh veggies.

Location is another consideration when planning your garden. Many people tend to want to hide the vegetable garden away in a dark corner and save spotlight for the flowers. Vegetable gardens, however, need sunny, open spaces in order to thrive, so you won't reap a bounty if you are not willing to devote some real estate. Also, think about location when planting. You can economize space by planting vegetables next to each other that mature at different times. This way, you have already harvested one when it's neighbor is becoming mature, so both have plenty of space and sun when they need it most.

## Planting Your Vegetable Garden

Preparing the soil by putting some extra effort into your beds before planting will save you a lot of time and effort in the future. Dig the bed up to break up compacted soil (this will help with drainage) and remove rocks and weeds as you go. Try to pull out as much of the weed roots as possible so that they will not come back to haunt you later. This is



also a good time to amend your soil.

## Companion Plants in the Vegetable Garden

There are some plants that, when planted close together, will benefit each other. Likewise, there are certain combinations of plants that will inhibit the growth of one or both types of plants. Here are a few combinations to avoid:

- Potatoes—inhibit growth of tomatoes and squash.
- Beans—inhibit growth of onions
- Broccoli—inhibits growth of tomatoes
- Carrots—inhibit growth of dill

This isn't to say that you can't grow these plants together in the same garden, just don't grow them right next to each other.

## Watering

Vegetables need a bit of extra care when it comes to watering. Consistent watering will produce successful results. If you have a large garden, you may want to consider a soaker hose. This will ensure that your plants get an even watering without getting leaves wet, and all you have to do is remember to turn on the hose.

## Rotating Crops

Assuming that you plan to grow vegetables more than one year, it is important that you rotate your crops. Crop rotation prevents building diseases up on the soil and preserves micro-nutrients. Rotating is not very difficult, but does take a little advance planning as well as

a basic knowledge of the vegetable families. Vegetables are broken down into basic family groups. These groups should be rotated together as they use soil in similar ways and share similar pests.

- Alliums—include Onions, Garlic Scallions, Shallots, and Leeks.
- Brassicas—include Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cabbage, Brussels Sprouts, and Kale.
- Crucifer—include Turnips, Radishes, Rutabaga, and Collards.
- Cucurbits—include Cucumbers, Squashes (from Zucchini to Pumpkin), and Melons.
- Legumes—include Peas and Beans.
- Mescluns—include Arugula, Swiss Chard, Chicory, Endive, Escarole, and Radicchio.
- Solanaceae—include Tomatoes, Peppers and Eggplant.

Perennial vegetables such as Asparagus, Rhubarb and Artichokes should not be rotated, and therefore should be planted separately. The rest (most vegetables are hardy or semi-hardy annuals) should be rotated every year on a four-year plan (so that the same family of vegetables is not planted in the same location within four years). This is easy to accommodate if you have planted four beds for your rotating plants and one bed for your non-rotating perennials. See where that advanced planning starts to come in handy?

## Timing

How many times have you had a co-worker or friend arrive at your home or office with bags full of zucchini or cucumbers? If you plant all your vegetables at the same time, everything will come to maturity at the same time. The solution is to continually plant small amounts of short-season vegetables throughout the growing season. That way, you can enjoy your vegetables all summer long and not be inundated by them all at once.

## Vegetable Container Gardens

Vegetables that thrive when planted in containers include tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, carrots, chard, lettuce, beans, peas, and cucumbers. For information on how to get started, visit their website at <http://www.helpfulgardener.com>.