From the Potting Shed…

After staff changes and a winter hiatus our Dishing the Dirt newsletter has re-emerged just in time for Spring! We hope the information you find here is as useful a gardening tool as your trowel or rake. It was a tough winter even for well-seasoned Minnesota gardeners and most of us are eager to get outside and enjoy the color green again. As you wander around your gardens, take note of what made it through and more importantly what did not and what might need just a little encouragement and patience as we experience a cooler than normal Spring. If you are looking for new plants, stop by our annual Spring Plant Sale this Saturday, May 18th from 9 – 11 am at the Sherburne County Fairgrounds. Plants come from the gardens of the SCMG, so you never know what you might find. You’ll find more details in the What’s Coming Up section. Hopefully you can learn something new and useful in this month’s newsletter.

Plant happy!

The Sherburne County Master Gardeners

Lawn care: ‘Tis the season…Finally!

As you read this, it has likely been only a week or two that you’ve been able to see your lawn this spring. What an interesting spring it’s been!

The University of Minnesota Climatology Team provided a summary of our weather conditions throughout the month of April, which, in many cases was a record setting month. Needless to say, lawn care practices have been pushed back much later this year. As we get into the swing of things with the growing season, here are several considerations for lawn care practices this spring.

Spring cleanup

One of the most important spring lawn care practices is simply cleanup of leaves, grass debris, pet poop, etc. If this debris is left on the lawn for too long it will hinder grass growth underneath. Often this can be a waiting game, as getting on the lawn too early can cause more harm than good.

of life, a nice cleanup effort will do wonders. I suggest to use a leaf rake or blower to go over your lawn lightly and add the collected debris to your compost pile.

Crabgrass prevention Preemergent herbicides used to prevent crabgrass must be put down before crabgrass germinates to be effective. The correct timing for these applications can change every year, and this year is no different. As of this writing, we are
Seedling of large crabgrass
(K. Cavanaugh, D. Breneman)

just beginning to recommend
applications of crabgrass
preventers in the Twin
Cities.

Most of these products contain fertilizer and because
of this, we want to be sure the grass is growing before
making an application. Fertilizer applications to
dormant lawns are not recommended due to the
potential movement of these nutrients when the grass
is not actively absorbing them.

Many homeowners often use phenological indicators
to make these applications, such as when the
forsythias are blooming, and this can be an excellent
indicator of when to apply these products.

I like to use a growing degree day tracker, which can
be found here: gdtracker.net. Simply input your zip
code and select crabgrass PRE from the menu. Dr.
Kevin Frank from Michigan State University explains
this website in greater detail here.

Snow molds

Pink snow mold on the St. Paul campus in April 2018 (S. Bauer)

Damage to lawns from snow mold is nothing new for
us Minnesotans. Ultimately, there are three species of
snow mold fungi that affect lawns in Minnesota—pink
snow mold, gray snow mold, and speckled snow mold
(gray and speckled snow mold are often discussed
together as they both occur from the typhula fungus).

The good news with snow mold is that damage to
lawns is rarely devastating and we often suggest a
light leaf rake over the area to encourage

recovery. Fertilizers and overseeding will also aid in
recovery.

For more information on snow molds, please
visit this article written by Extension Educator Michelle
Grabowski.

Restoring winter-damaged lawns

If you experienced lawn damage from winter or if your
lawn was in poor shape last fall, there are several
steps that you can take to improve the quality of your
lawn this spring. First and foremost, overseeding will
likely be required, and in that case, be sure to not
apply a crabgrass preventer to areas that you plan to
overseed; traditional crabgrass preventers will also
prevent the germination of desirable grasses.

Two products that will prevent crabgrass germination
and still allow germination of grass seed are: siduron
and mesotrione. You can purchase these active
ingredients in combination products with a starter
fertilizer, which would also be appropriate for new
establishments.

Characteristics of various cool-season grasses for
Minnesota lawns can be found here. We also have
information available on selecting grass
seed and where to purchase. Finally, follow these
publications for more information on selecting grass
seed mixtures: Part 1 and Part 2.

Final thoughts

The cold spring this year has certainly shortened the
window for spring lawn care practices. With proper
planning, you should still be able to accomplish all the
lawn care activities that you had intended to this
year.

Although not discussed in this article, be sure to keep
in mind all the important cultural practices for a
healthy, environmentally friendly lawn. This would
include judicious watering, proper mowing practices
and heights, aeration, and sound fertility
practices. Before you know it, summer will arrive!

Source: May 01, 2, & LandscapeTurfgrass, ’L. (n.d.). Lawn care: 'Tis
the season...Finally! Retrieved from https://blog-yard-garden-
news.extension.umn.edu/2018/05/lawn-care-tis-seasonfinally.html
Weed of the Month

**ONE GARDENER’S WEED IS ANOTHER GARDENER’S WILDFLOWER**

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) – a perennial weed with a basal growth habit and a long taproot.

Love them or hate them, we all know them and almost all of us have them in our lawns and gardens. Some people delight in their bright sunny color while others cringe at the sight of even one. These plants can be the bane of homeowners and gardeners who work endlessly to remove them from lawns and gardens, especially before they set seed and all those little seed parachutes float off in the breeze. But growing evidence suggests these plants are of great value to our pollinators, especially in the spring when other pollen sources are scarce. New research into the quantity and quality of the pollen and nectar of plants indicate we may need to change how we look at this so-called weed. If, however, you feel you need to rid yourself of this persistent plant here are the recommended methods of control from the University of Minnesota Extension’s “Control options for common Minnesota lawn and landscape weeds.” First, try removing them manually by pulling or using a dandelion fork to sever the tough taproot. If you don’t remove all or most of the root it will regenerate. If you have large numbers of them, you can use a selective post-emergent broadleaf herbicide such as 2,4D. This will kill selected broadleaf weeds including dandelions but not the grass. You can use a non-selective post emergent herbicide such as glyphosate, but as the name implies it isn’t selective and will kill everything including grass and other desirable plants. These plants are best treated early in the spring before they set seed or in the fall while still actively growing. Always read and follow the directions on the label of any pesticide.

Or you can just live with a few of them and tell people it’s part of your bee friendly landscape. For more information about this weed [Click HERE](#).

What’s Coming Up with the SCMG

**Sherburne County Master Gardeners**

**Plant Sale**

**Saturday, May 18, 2019**

9:00 - 11:00 am

**Sherburne County Fairgrounds**

18338 Joplin St NW, Elk River, MN 55330

Ring in Spring by supporting the Sherburne County Master Gardeners Program at their Annual Plant Sale! Flowers, bulbs, shrubs, seedlings, herbs, and other garden related items will be available to purchase at a great price!

Master Gardeners will be available to assist you in shopping and answer questions.
What’s Coming Up Continued…

**MALMBORG’S GREENHOUSE AND GARDEN CENTER AND SCMG SPRING FUNDRAISER**

- Sunday May 19th thru Saturday May 25th
- Present the SCMG Shopper Form at checkout and 10% of the pre-tax purchase will be donated to SCMG’s ongoing education efforts
- The SCMG Shopper Form will soon be available at our Plant Sale, on our website and our Facebook page

**JUNIOR MASTER GARDENERS**

Designed for youth First grade and up (ages 6 - 12) to learn all about gardening with hands on experience and projects from the Junior Master Gardener Program curriculum.

**LIBRARY SERIES**

Jointly Sponsored by the Great River Regional Library – Elk River and the SCMG
- Thursdays June 13th – August 15th except July 4th; 1:00 – 2:00 pm
- Classes held at the Great River Regional Library – Elk River Branch
- No fee, pre-registration required.

Register with the library at [https://griver.org/events](https://griver.org/events) and select the Elk River Branch to see the calendar and links to the registration form

**FAIRGROUND SERIES**

Sponsored by the SCMG
- Thursdays June 6th – August 8th except July 4th and July 18th; 6:30 – 8:00 pm
- Classes held at the Sherburne County Fairgrounds
- $10 fee to cover supplies, pre-registration required

Register on the SCMG website [https://sherburnecountymastergardener.org](https://sherburnecountymastergardener.org).

**GARDENING CLASS WITH A MASTER GARDENER**

Jointly Sponsored by the Great River Regional Library – Elk River and the SCMG
- Friday June 14th, Friday July 19th and Friday August 16th; 1 – 2 pm
- Classes held at the Great River Regional Library – Elk River Branch
- Free but pre-registration encouraged

Register with the library at [https://griver.org/events](https://griver.org/events) and select the Elk River Branch to see the calendar and links.

**Q AND A WITH THE MASTER GARDENERS**

- Second Tuesday of every month, May thru September 1 – 2 pm
- Garden talks held at the Elk River Activity Center 55yrs+
- Bring your questions and even your plants
- Free but registration is preferred by calling 763.635.4500

**BIG LAKE GARDENING 101 SERIES**

Learn the basics of gardening with hands on learning
- Sponsored by the City of Big Lake, Big Lake Community Education and the SCMG
- Tuesday June 4th, July 9th, August 6th, September 17th; 6 – 7 pm
- Classes held at the Big Lake Community Gardens

Registration and more information at [https://biglake.ce.elecyo.com](https://biglake.ce.elecyo.com)

**ELK RIVER FARMER’S MARKET**

- Thursdays June 6th thru October 3rd; 3 – 7 pm
- Located downtown Elk River at Park Plaza on Main Street
- Stop by and visit us at the City of Elk River Table

**BIG LAKE FARMER’S MARKET**

- The market is held Wednesdays June 5 thru Aug 28, 3 – 7 pm; Wednesdays in September 3 – 6 pm
- We are there every 3rd Wednesday of the month
- Located at Lakeside Park
- Stop by and enjoy a gardening activity for kids