

Clean Up the Yard and Throw a Party!

Without realizing it, you may be making nasty comments to yourself about yourself when you go into your front or back yard. You may be mumbling that you're too lazy to pick up the trash, weed the garden beds, and put the tools away.

Every time you see these things on your way to and from the house (which is really quite often), you have an opportunity to wince a little and feel overwhelmed and self-critical. If you live in an apartment, you may feel this way when you look at your entryway or balcony.

Is it time to take down the winter decorations and clear away the dead plants in your decorative pots? Is it time to pick up the dusty, faded, plastic toys and heave-ho? How about sweeping and tidying up the front walkway and porch? It would look so nice when you get home from a long day and just need a little bit of comfort.

Why not take advantage of the next nice day (weather-wise) to pick up the yard and get it spiffed up so that it pleases your eyes as you approach? So that it says "welcome home."

My Trick is to Throw a Party

I'm fairly lazy about my yard and garden, but I have found a way to trick myself into keeping it looking nice. I have company! I host a barbecue every year on the July 4 because I live on the river close to the big fireworks display. This party gives me a built-in opportunity every year to get my yard company-ready. If you don't have a summer party planned, why not plan one? Or a fall bountiful feast, or a spring fling, or a winter repast? Having company can serve as a motivator to get the yard cleaned up. And get rid of any junk ... like the items listed below.

Popular Junk in People's Yards

- an old couch that needs to be hauled off
- rusted farm implements
- a broken refrigerator
- empty pots
- unraveled, leaky hoses
- broken toys
- rusting bicycles
- rakes without handles
- hand tools
- buckets, old tubs, and other containers

What junk is in your yard?

Can You Simplify Your Yard?

One reason our yards get trashed is that we have too much stuff and our lives are too complicated and busy. Can you think of ways to simplify your yard?

Have you noticed that every spoonful of dirt you turn over is prime real estate for weeds? I set a goal years ago to have gardens all the way around my house. This is one goal I wish I hadn't achieved because now I have to weed, weed, weed all the way around my house. Another goal I wish I hadn't put into motion was to mulch my entire yard instead of mow it. Turns out that mulching is much more work than mowing. So don't turn over even a spoonful of earth unless you're prepared to weed and tend to it. There **is** nothing easier than mowing – except maybe pavement.

This spring it dawned on me that I didn't have the time to care sufficiently for a complicated yard design. While drinking coffee and staring out at it one morning, I finally decided that **destruction was the answer**. I started getting excited. I longed for a simpler yard that wouldn't embarrass me and remind me of my overblown garden goals.

To simplify all of the yard tasks I decided to tear out some of the flower beds lined with rocks (so I wouldn't have to weed whack them). And I put in sod.

Because the garden beds were lined with rocks, I put an ad in my local freecycle group (national group, freecycle.org): FREE GARDEN ROCKS FOR THE TAKING. Two groups of people came and took all the big rocks. Now I can easily mow that big garden plot instead of weed and weed whack it. I love it! I can take care of my entire yard now in about 25 minutes because of those two changes – taking out some of the gardens and garden rocks so I can mow and turning my yard back to yard, not mulch. Just to clarify: using mulch in gardens is a fabulous idea – mulching the entire yard is not a fabulous idea unless you have a truck, an inexpensive endless supply of mulch, and free weekends to haul and spread it.

Is there something you can do in your yard to simplify yard tasks? Whatever you do, don't turn over any more dirt...unless you really like to weed.

Here are a few more tips for cleaning up the yard

1. Imagine that your yard is another room in your house. What changes would make it relaxing, refreshing, and appealing?
2. See your yard as if for the first time. Is there anything junky that needs to be put away, gotten rid of, or cleaned up? Why not take a few minutes to put anything away in your yard that doesn't belong there.
3. If something big needs to be hauled off, contact the city to see about trash pickup. They will usually come to pick up large items if you make an appointment.

4. If the weeds are winning the battle of the yard, determine that you will weed 30 minutes every morning or evening after work. On this regimen, most yards (even neglected ones) will look pretty great by the end of the week. Put some mulch on them (yes mulch) and you won't have to weed so much next time.

It will feel great to take care of your yard. I know, I just did it. I feel a lot more on top of life. A junky yard can make you feel junky. A clean yard can make you feel clean and green.