

# Intro to Gardening and Composting



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# Welcome

## Topics:

- Lawn Care
  - How to “wake up” your lawn
- Gardening
  - How to prepare your garden
  - Things to consider when planting
  - Pests
  - Basic tree care
- Composting
  - Pros and cons
  - Building a compost
  - Weekly upkeep



# Lawn Care

## Dethatch

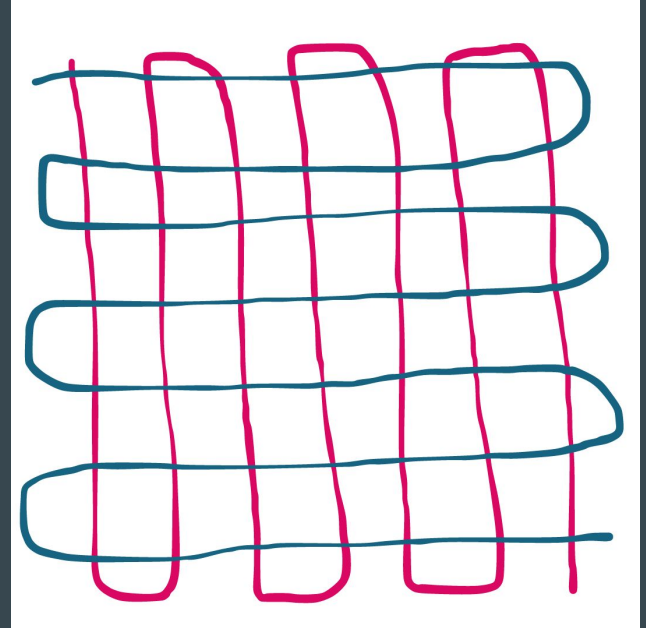
- Thatch is a matted layer of dead grass separating the live grass from the soil below.

## Aerate

- Aerating allows the nutrients to get into the soil by breaking up the natural compaction that occurs over time.

## Fertilize

- Ideal time to fertilize is when the grass is dry, but the ground is damp.



# Lawn Care

## Soil Test Kits

- Tests soil for the levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium as well as the pH.
- Helps ensure you are purchasing the best fertilizer for your soils needs.
- Can be purchased at any garden center or online.



# Lawn Care

## Watering

- Recommended that your lawn gets 1” of water per week in one or two watering sessions.
- Allow the soil to dry out between waterings.
- Early morning is the best time to water.

## Mowing

- Wait 2 -4 weeks after aerating your lawn.
- Best to mow when the grass is dry.
- Don't remove more than ½ the length of the grass at a time.
- Alternate patterns when mowing to help it grow straighter and avoid lawn compaction.

# Gardening

## Before you plant

- Rototill your garden. Similar to aerating, this breaks up dirt compaction to allow water and nutrients to get down into the soil.
- Test the soil and mix in new topsoil, fertilizer and/or compost.

## Important things to consider

- Space available vs. space needed.
- Harvesting timetable of each fruit or vegetable plant.

# Gardening

## Pests and your plants

- Insecticidal soap, available at any garden center.
- Deterring or controlling pests by use of other insects.
- Physical barrier, such as a thin net.
- Not all bugs are bad!
- Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development resource for backyard pest management.

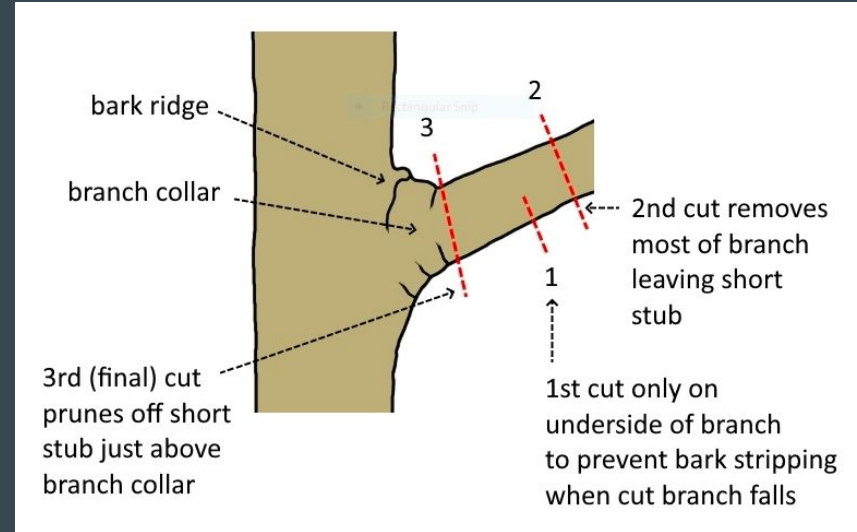
# Tree Pruning Basics

Why is it important?

- Removes dead, diseased, or broken branches without stressing out the tree.
- Removes the wasted effort of nutrients to revive dead or dying branch.
- Can control the plants size and shape.

How?

- To avoid stress on the tree, use the 3-cut strategy.





# Composting

What is compost?

- A soil conditioner and fertilizer made up of decayed organic matter.

Pros:

- Improves health and structure of your soil.
- Helps retain moisture and nutrients.
- Attracts beneficial organisms to the soil, reduces need for pesticides and fertilizers.

Cons:

- Time and effort.
- Space and smell.
- Aesthetic.



# Composting

## Building a compost

- Pick a spot that is in a level, well-drained, and accessible area.
- 2/3rds “brown” material such as autumn leaves, shredded paper, paper towel, or lawn clippings.
- Use “green” materials such as kitchen scraps such as fruits, veggies, coffee or tea, left overs, even hair in layers with approximately 5 cm of soil.
- Add water into the compost until it is as damp as a wrung-out sponge.

# Composting

## Weekly upkeep

- Continue to add kitchen scraps to the compost bin
- Aerate it (“fluff” it up)
- Ensure the bin stays damp and warm.

## Composting meat

- It is not recommended to compost meat in your backyard. It will attract many unwanted pests (rats, raccoons, dogs, coyotes, etc).
- Creates dangerous pathogens, potential for serious illness if the compost is used on food that is consumed.

# Composting

## Worms

- Worms benefit your compost by naturally aerating it as they tunnel through it. This helps beneficial bacteria to grow and break down scraps faster.
- Red Wigglers are recommended, they eat rotting vegetative matter. Not naturally found in your yard, but they are inexpensive to purchase.
- Earthworms are commonly found in the backyard and garden. While still beneficial for aerating, they prefer to eat soil than rotting matter.
- Best compost for worms is one with an open bottom.
- Do not put worms in a compost tumbler!

# Composting

Want the benefits of a compost without having to maintain one?

City of Edmonton compost is available at Ambleside (14710 Ellerslie Road SW) or Kennedale (5355 127 Ave) Eco Station.

- Pickup is free, but limited to 100 L
- Must bring your own shovel and container(s).

# Thank you!

To access our Basic Spring Lawn and Garden Care digital PDF, please scan the QR code.

