



A Few Hours of Yard Work

The time of year for ‘cocooning’ indoors is behind us. Spring in Calaveras County is the perfect opportunity to venture out into the yard and take a good look around. The season’s greening and flowering is beginning, and with some rain still to come and temperatures mild, invest some time and energy in your yard and garden and you will enjoy the fruits of your labor for the rest of this year, and with some forethought, many years to come.

It is interesting how many people invest so much of their focus on the inside of their homes, while avoiding the outside. Maybe it’s a result of having garages that often lead directly into the house. I suppose that many hard working people can avoid their yards altogether, if they drive to and from work, and often in the dark, at that! But remember, your guests usually come in through the front door, so follow their footsteps when you get a minute, and check out the landscape.

Weeding is free, and can improve the look of your flowerbeds immediately. Do it while the ground is still soft. Empty areas in the beds can then be filled with annual or perennial flowers or shrubs, and then a piece of garden art, such as a ceramic animal, metal sculpture or cement stepping stone, can tucked among the foliage.

Collect all branches and pine needles that may have been scattered by the winter winds, rake the yard or mow the lawn, and sweep all the walkways clean. The local nursery can help answer any questions about lawn and garden care, and appropriate plants for the bare areas in your yard. Just adding one tree or shrub each spring, or freshening an area with a pot of annual flowers will make a big difference.

The exterior walls of your home can be embellished just like the interior, with flowers potted in a window box, a decorative plaque, an outdoor wreath or a seasonal flag. Note the color of your home’s exterior and trim, and keep it in mind when buying outdoor plants or decorative items. Most beautiful gardens have a huge variety of colors and plants, but some colors work better together than others, so stay with complimentary seasonal colors that appeal to you.

Do you have a corner of your yard that is quiet, private or beautiful? Take a couple of patio chairs to that area, perhaps with a small table, and, not only will you have a place to retreat to, but the seating area will add a spot of personality to your yard. Throw a pillow or two onto the chairs for extra color and comfort.

Your wish list for the yard may include a hammock, some redwood or Adirondack chairs, a birdbath, patio furniture, a sun umbrella, or yard games such as crochet, badminton or even a basketball hoop. The idea is to make your yard a place to be used and enjoyed by all members of the family.

Check that your bar-b-que has an adequate supply of charcoal briquettes or propane, so that you will be prepared for that impromptu dinner outside. Look at the patio area nearest the door to the kitchen, and see if you can set up an informal dining area, using the picnic table or patio furniture you already have.

If the yard is strewn with bikes, toys, and gardening tools, find a place to keep them. If you don't have a garage, how about storing these things in a shed, against the fence, or around the other side of the house? Everything should ideally have a storage place so that a quick scan of the area will reveal a clean place to relax. We can all use a place for refuge, and in the next few months, there is no reason for you to spend time reading or reflecting inside the house only.

By using your yard as another area of your home, you can virtually increase the square footage available to you for relaxing and entertaining. Having dinner or a bar-b-que on the patio forces you outside, away from the television or computer. Now you can enjoy the sound of the crickets, the smell of the food, and the view of your newly spruced up yard!

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