

FLAK'S NEWS

TEL. (952) 937-2105

Visit us at
www.flaknes.com

Check out our new
Blog section

Flak's Facts:

The amount of oxygen produced by an acre of trees per year equals the amount consumed by 18 people annually. One tree produces nearly 260 pounds of oxygen each year.



Member,
Minnesota Nursery and
Landscape Association
"Creating and caring for
your environment"

Inside this issue:

A Time for Growth.....pg 1
What's Hot? Your Home!...pg 1
Drought Help pg 2
S'more Fun!.....pg 2
Lawn Burnpg 3
Pondless Water Features...pg 3
2008 Perennialpg 4

A Time for Growth!

Welcome Spring! My family and I just returned from a wonderful, warm, and relaxing vacation in Florida so I am now rested and ready to go this spring! Last year, Flakne's enjoyed its most successful season to date (every year I keep saying that—thank you!) and I needed the long winter to rest and get rejuvenated.

And just like me, your yards are anxious to greet the spring with fresh new growth! Spring is a great time for **renewal** for all of us! What's new with Flakne's? Check out our web site. Last year, I promised changes and my very busy landscaping season made it difficult for me to spend much time on that. Recently, though, I have enjoyed working with my new web designer, Jeshua Erickson, and you will now find some fun changes. I've

added some wonderful photos of some of my past projects. Thanks to Petruska Photography for their artistic photographs. And check out my new blog section, featuring how to deal with our spring and fall friends, the box elder bugs!

Many changes to my company are unnoticeable to my clients, but to me, my various software programs are tweaked and running more efficiently and I am ready to go!

The biggest change for Flakne's and for the Flakne family last year was that we started attending Westwood Community Church here in Chanhassen. I am amazed, although I shouldn't be, at how our lives have been transformed when we began to follow Christ in our journey. Our family life is more peaceful and purposeful. We

have met so many incredible people and our boys are enjoying wonderful opportunities through their youth groups and retreats. I begin each day reading my Bible and asking the Good Lord for guidance in my day. Last year, I took my hands off the steering wheel and allowed God to point me and my business in the right direction. The stress of running my company disappeared and I was "rewarded" with working with so many wonderful people while enjoying my most successful season ever! I have always run my life and business with honesty and integrity, but with the spirit of the Lord behind me this past year, I know the success we enjoyed was no accident. I hope and pray you and your families enjoy the same type of blessings!

Greg Flakne, CP

What's Hot? Your Home!

Thinking of selling your home? The real estate market has certainly slowed from its boon we saw several years ago. The seller's market has transformed into a buyer's market, and if you are trying to sell your home now, you will most likely need to make improvements to have your home show at its best. The market is a com-

petitive one and homebuyers are looking for something special!

A large number of home buyers will make a decision on whether they even want to see the inside of your home by what they see on the outside! Few home improvements offer a better return on your investment than improving the exterior landscape of

your home. Enhancing the landscaping and "curb appeal" will increase your home's value and even help you sell your home sooner in a down market. If your landscaping looks great but you just need something special to set your home apart from



(Continued on page 3, col. 3)

Drought Help for Your Lawn

Twenty years ago, when we built our home, I remember hesitating to install an automatic irrigation system for my lawn and landscape beds. But my wife told me that without sprinklers, there would be no need for grass or landscaping because she had no intention of schlepping a hose around the yard! Our automatic sprinkler system was one of the best investments we have made in our home and our marriage! The Flakne yard is always a work in progress, but our grass is always green. Then we were hit with last summer's drought, accompanied by a total watering ban. Many people asked me how to save their lawns from the lack of water during the summer drought. You may have heard that a lawn will actually go dormant without water in the summer, as it does during the winter months. This is somewhat true. Your lawn must start out healthy in order to survive an extended period of time without water in the hot summer months. You will need to take some proactive steps to ensure you will see green again.

Before a drought hits, make sure that when you water your grass, you water the proper amount at each watering session. You'll probably save water overall, and save money too. The city of Chanhassen, where I live, has adopted a new three tier billing policy. Use less water, pay a lower price per gallon. I know many other cities in the area are billing in a similar manner.

So how much water is right for your lawn? When to water and how much water really depends on the type of soil, the type of grass, weather conditions, etc. It is best to wait to water until your grass is just beginning to show signs of stress. You can tell that your lawn is drying out when footprints remain in the grass because the blades are too limp to bounce back. You may also notice a grayish tint to the grass as it dries out. When you think the time is right, always water down to the roots, about six inches for an established lawn. If the soil is sandy, it will take less water to reach the roots than if the soil is of a clay consistency. To see how far your water is draining and to check the root system depth, push a shovel into the grass right after watering, separating the soil and turf far enough apart to take look at how far the water

has soaked into the soil and roots. The roots will grow to the depth of the water penetration. So if you water your lawn just a little bit at each watering, the water may only drain to a depth of about 1/2 to 1 inch, which is no way to develop a deep root system. A strong disease and weed resistant lawn needs the roots to grow to a depth of about six inches. So when you water, you need to let the water run long enough to allow the water to penetrate to that depth. For my clay soil, that's about .75 inch to 1.5 inches of water. To figure how long you'll need to water to saturate the soil to the roots in your yard, simply place several small saucers or cans on your grass. Turn on the sprinklers and keep track of the time it takes for the water in the containers to reach your desired level. Then water for that amount of time. When figuring watering time, remember to count any recent rainwater! Then don't water again until your lawn is just showing signs of thirst.

Automatic sprinkler systems are now installed with rain sensors. Sprinklers won't turn on if a sensor measures that a rainfall has watered your lawn sufficiently. Your lawn stays healthy and you save water and money!

Enough about watering. There are other things you can do to prevent the slow death of your lawn before a ban is imposed. Keep your lawn aerated to develop a healthy root system. Reduce thatch and compaction. Maintain your fertilizing schedule. Only mow the top third of the blade and let the clippings remain on the grass for extra nutrition and to hold in moisture.

If a total watering ban is implemented, eliminate traffic on your grass, and if the grass needs mowing, only mow the top one fourth of the blade. Then pray for rain. When the ban is lifted, give your grass a deep watering to restore moisture and start the root growth. After a week or two of deep watering, apply a weed killer to individual weeds (weeds will compete with the grass for water and nutrients). And remember to fertilize—your grass will be hungry for nutrients.

I hope these tips will help you and your lawn in the hot days ahead. Just watch, though. Now that you are ready for a drought, it will probably rain all summer!

S'more Fun!

Minnesotans, wanting to make the most of the outdoors during our short summer season, are catching on to the new trend of creating backyard living rooms. In the last few years, great strides have been made in creating fun and functional outdoor fireplaces and patio fire pits. Make lasting memories with family and friends around a new, **gas** backyard campfire. Games, songs, s'mores, and scary stories will be enjoyed by all who relax around your professionally designed campfire area. These new natural gas "campfires" light quickly and eliminate the need for wood chopping, messy ashes, and dangerous lingering coals. Turn it on when you're ready for fun and off when it's time to go in.



These wonderful patio campfires can be fueled by a standard liquid propane tank, or for convenience, a permanent natural gas line can be connected to the unit. A professionally designed campfire area, with your personal style of entertaining in mind, will be the hit of your backyard and neighborhood! Call me and I can show you how you can start your new outdoor tradition!

Dog Gone It—Lawn Burn!

The snow has melted and if you have a dog, especially a female dog, you are probably dismayed to see a winter's worth of "lawn burn" circles in your lawn where your dog urinates. Pull at the grass in the brown spots, and if it is still firmly rooted, your dog is the culprit. Have you ever spilled fertilizer on your lawn and seen the effects of too much fertilizer in one spot? That's excess nitrogen at work. Your dog's urine also has high concentrations of nitrogen that have the same affect on your lawn. You can try to get your dog to dilute her urine by drinking lots of water. Adding non-salted broth to her water bowl might be the perfect incentive! Or flush her area of grass with water to dilute the nitrogen. Feed your dog a high quality food, with no more protein than she requires. High quality dog foods contain more digestible proteins which will keep the nitrogenous wastes to a minimum. Don't give in to myths such as feeding your dog tomato juice, salt, baking soda, MSG, or other supplements to change her body chemistry.

Stressed lawns are more susceptible to lawn burn so keep your lawn well watered, aerated, and healthy. Avoid over fertiliz-

ing in your dog's special area as the nitrogen in the urine might put the lawn "over the edge".



If your spots are very bad, you may need to reseed the burned spots. Just rake the bulk of the dead grass away and loosen the soil. Sprinkle with fescue or perennial ryegrass seeds, which are more urine resistant than Kentucky bluegrass. Keep the area well watered until the seed germinates. Best yet, train Rover to do her thing in a less visible location.

By the way, female dogs don't create more nitrogen waste than males. Females just leave their good fortune right on the grass while males tend to cover less ground, using the trickle down affect, if you know what I mean.

What's Hot?

(continued from page 1)

the others on the market, then take a look at the article on page 2 about patio campfires or the article below about pondless water features!

If you are thinking that you might put your home on the market in the next few years, then this is the **perfect** time to invest in a makeover. A good design will bring out the best in your home by optimizing its best features and hiding the least desirable ones. Thin out or move plants in crowded areas. Replace overgrown shrubs and hedges now with smaller sizes. In a year or two, the plant material will grow to the proper size and scale to complement your home. Just like a new haircut, sometimes it takes some time for a newly landscaped yard to look its best.

Maybe your landscaping already looks great by day. Then give yourself an edge by showing off your home at night! Sidewalks, decks, and patios will be safer at night when illuminated. Take a look at the Landscape Lighting section on my web site for ideas on uplighting beautiful trees or moonlighting your special landscape features.

Whether you are trying to sell your home or just need a fresh new look, please give me a call and we can discuss a plan of action.

Look Ma! No Pond!

One of the most fun trends to hit the landscaping industry lately is the "disappearing" or "pondless" water feature. Water cascades from its rocky source, then disappears into a bed of river rock. No pond is needed as the water trickles to the end of the "stream", seeps through the rocks into a catch basin, then is pumped and circulated back to the top of the waterfall. These water features offer a safer alternative for those with small children – no safety issues because there is no standing water. They are compact and can serve as a focal point in any size yard or

area. The water feature shown in the photograph to the right is actually near the front entry of the home and welcomes visitors with the calming sound of trickling water. These waterfalls are operated with just a flip of a switch, are energy efficient, and require very little maintenance. What more could you want? Maybe enjoying your water feature at night! Low voltage landscape lighting and water are the perfect ingredients for an evening of relaxation. I am happy to show you how you can enjoy the peaceful sound of trickling water in your

own yard this summer! Homeowners who have recently had a pondless water feature installed in their yard tell me that it was one of the best investments they have made for their outdoor living room!



FLAKNE'S NEWS

FLAKNE'S EXTERIOR DESIGN/SCAPE CO.



Your satisfaction is my success—for 12 years!

2008 Perennial Plant of the Year



And the winner is..... Geranium "Rozanne"! This iridescent violet-blue geranium won the hearts of the Perennial Plant Association and was named Perennial Plant of 2008! This hardy geranium was discovered by Donald and Rozanne Waterer in their Somerset, England garden in 1989. The 2 1/2 inch, saucer shaped flowers have bright white centers and purple-violet veins. Plant "Rozanne" as a ground cover or show her off in a window box, patio container, or in a hanging basket. "Rozanne" prefers moist, well-drained soil and full sun to partial shade, especially afternoon shade. This hardy geranium will grow from 20-24 inches tall and 24-28 inches wide and will show off well accompanied by Shasta daisies, perennial salvia, hostas, and short ornamental grasses. As one of the longest flowering of the hardy geraniums, "Rozanne" will continue blooming from late spring through mid-fall.