

FLAK'S NEWS

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Effective 2-27-00

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*(Don't look too soon!
Our Web site is still un-
der construction! Check
on us later this Spring!)*

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It's That Time of Year Again...

Best wishes for a happy spring 2000! As I write this, the calendar says it's still winter, but tell that to the children playing outdoors! The first hint of spring tends to recharge my energy levels for the busy season ahead. Although my wife says her favorite season is Spring, she realizes she may have more robin sightings than Greg sightings around our house! It's difficult for either of us to complain though. I was blessed with yet another prosperous and fulfilling season in 1999. I am thankful for all my customers who have allowed me to help them with their landscape projects. And I am especially grateful when my loyal customers refer their friends, neighbors, and

family members to me. Thank you for four successful years!

Many people think I take the winters off. Quite the contrary! During winter months, I work hard to review the previous season and make improvements to streamline my business. This past winter, I purchased a new computer and new design software and have been busy learning and adjusting to these changes. I have recently set up a web site for my company at Flaknes.com and will have it set up to include sample projects and information to help you make your landscaping decisions from your home. Also, I have a new email address: greg@flaknes.com.

com. I also attended the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association convention in Minneapolis and am proud to serve on the MNLA Certification Committee. Our committee tests interested members of the Nursery and Landscape industry on everything from horticulture, pest management, landscape design to business management. A title of "Certified Nursery and Landscape Professional" or **CNLP** is earned by passing written and oral exams. A professional with this title is concerned with creating and maintaining a high standard of excellence in our industry and producing quality work. Happy Spring!

Greg Flakne, **CNLP**

Flakne wins MNLA Landscape Award!

I am pleased and proud to announce that this past January at the MNLA (Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association) convention, I was the recipient of an Environmental Improvement Award of Merit, recognizing the design and installation of one of my landscape projects. In fact,

the waterfall project I described in last year's newsletter was the award winner! That particular project was not only personally satisfying, but now it has proven to be a professional success as well! It is gratifying to have my work valued by my peers and industry experts.



For Those Lazy Days of Summer...

Remember the good old days when folks spent their summer evenings sitting on their front porch, watching the neighborhood activity with a pitcher of iced tea or lemonade nearby? In recent years, home construction has seen a comeback of the good 'ol front porch! Did the fast pace of the 90's finally get to us?

More and more homeowners enjoy relaxing in their front yard after a hard day's work—watching their children play or just chatting with the neighbors. Many people building new homes now specifically request a front porch to recreate that slower lifestyle of bygone days. So what if your home is porchless and porch construction is not an option? A

new trend in landscaping is to create a front patio—equipped with “setting a spell” furniture and a side

table to hold that lemonade! I have designed quite a few front patios over the past several years. Some have been small and intimate, others have been large and multi-functional. A front patio, as an ad-

ditional benefit, offers the opposite sun exposure enjoyed in the back of your home. These patios can be any shape and size, and can be made of stamped concrete, paver stones, or other materials. They are created to bring a new socialization area to the homes where none existed before—the front yard.



Many neighborhoods have seen a resurgence in neighborhood get-togethers, and many of those occur in the front yards. Parents watch their children in the front of their homes. Or maybe a social visit with friends calls you to the front yard. A designated sitting area is functional as well as an appealing way to enhance the entrance to your home.

Could it be that the turn of this new century will be remembered for how we slowed down our

busy pace and invested time in ourselves, our families, and our neighborhoods? That would be a wonderful legacy! Cheers!

When Is The Best Time To Prune?

Feeling a bit intimidated with those pruning shears in hand? You are not alone! Many people fear causing permanent damage to their plants because they lack the knowledge to properly prune and trim. It's the way I feel when my wife asks me to trim our dog! It may surprise you though, that lack of pruning may cause more damage than lack of experience.

Pruning is important for the growth and health of your shrubs and trees for several reasons.

Pruning:

1. removes broken, damaged, or diseased branches
2. improves branch structure by

encouraging new growth

3. promotes growth of fruits and flowers
4. rejuvenates older shrubs and evergreens
5. maintains shape and size

Since most people don't prune often enough, I often tell people that the best time to prune is when the pruners are in your hand. Do it when you think about it. There are a few exceptions, though, in which trees such as oaks and some fruit bearing trees require pruning at specific times of the year when they are least likely to become infected. Some flowering shrubs are best to prune immediately after they flower to

maximize future flower production. And there is a window of time in early fall when evergreens should not be pruned. Otherwise, **JUST DO IT!**

For the past year or so, I have sent customized plant descriptions and maintenance tips to my customers at the completion of their landscape project. To be certain about the proper care and maintenance of your own plants, please contact me and I will be happy to send specific instructions to you.

When pruning, think of the intended shape, the desired size, and height. Don't be afraid to make the first cut. Remember, like my dog's hair, it will always grow back!

What's HOT—Perennials!

Although Perennials have been used in gardening “forever”, they are the new buzz word in landscaping! Perennials can soften the transitions between lawns and the edge of a yard, along fences, as well as offer additional colors and textures to your yard. Perennials are herbaceous plants that die to the ground each fall and come up again each spring. With that broad definition, there are really many types of perennials.

Flowering perennials, such as irises will bring color to your yard and can be used as cut flowers to bring some



of that color indoors. Other flowering perennials are used as color accents in foundations or island beds.

Low, spreading perennials can be used as groundcovers in place of mulch or rocks for a greener and

softer feel. These groundcovers can often be planted in shady areas where grass is difficult to grow. However, since these groundcovers spread through their root systems, the short



Minnesota growing season may prevent many of these groundcovers from becoming well established.

Other perennials can do the trick, though.

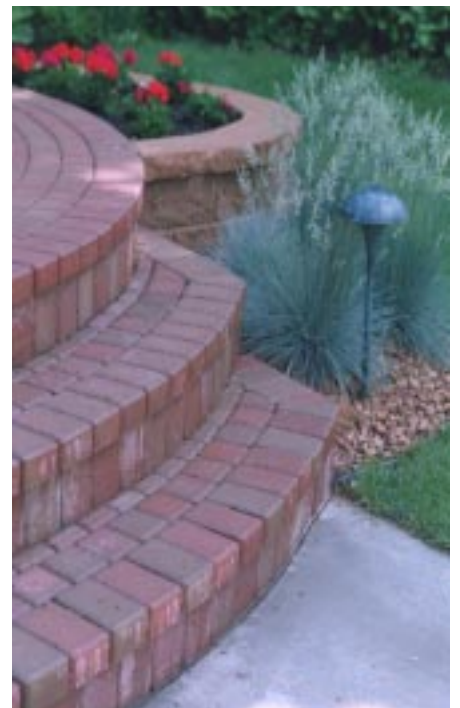
Hostas are a hardy alternative, especially in shady areas. There are literally hundreds of varieties of hostas to suit any look, growing site, or per-



sonal taste. These perennials can cover an area by growing close to each other, eventually covering the intended area. Hostas range in colors from creams to golds, from blue tones to greens, with leaves in varying sizes up to two feet in length. Variegated or solid, there are so many choices! Hostas can serve as groundcovers, edging plants, or as a focal point in the landscape. They are relatively maintenance free and disease and pest resistant.

Ornamental grasses are another type of perennial that have existed in our natural prairies. You probably already have ornamental grasses in your yard—your lawn! Many other types of ornamental grasses can be used in landscaping to create new textures, color, movement, and even sound! They can be used in mass plantings or as individual plantings, even as borders. Ornamental grasses are almost disease and insect free and require little maintenance. Just trim or cut back the old, dried foliage in the spring. And a good snow cover in the winter can actually add to their hardiness!

When many people think of perennials, the traditional English perennial gardens come to mind. However, there are so many varieties of perennials to create most any look or fulfill most any function. When selecting perennials, I can help you determine the light requirements, overall height and spread, blooming period, and color, if any. I would be happy to show you how perennials can give a new look to your landscape with minimal maintenance!



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