



(Family Features)

If cooler weather has you longing for sunny days outdoors, take heart. Once spring rolls around, you can safely begin the annual cleanup to prepare your yard for months of warm-weather enjoyment.

Start by evaluating your lawn. Look for bald spots where grass has grown sparsely and needs reseeding, or uneven areas that may need to be filled and leveled.

Before you take steps to correct any problems, you'll need a clean slate. Clear the yard of any leaves, rocks or sticks that may have accumulated then cut the grass as short as you can. Use a thatching rake to remove dead roots and grass. Break up the soil in bare spots to create an environment that will be hospitable to new seed. Add lawn soil to level the surface.

You'll also need to apply an herbicide to treat weed-infested areas. Allow the weed killer to work for about a week then rake again to remove dead weeds.

Then you're ready to over-seed or spot seed, depending on your lawn's needs. Your climate will determine the best grass variety for your yard. Be sure to select and apply a fertilizer that is consistent with your grass type and water thoroughly to promote deep root growth, which can help your lawn withstand extreme conditions as temperatures rise.

Your lawn isn't the only part of your yard that needs attention during the spring months, though. Your garden and flower beds may need some care before they, too, are ready to burst with new bounty and color.

Begin by clearing your garden and beds of any debris like leaves and other matter that piled up during months of neglect. Gently turn the soil and work in fresh fertilizer.

Before your plants and flowers are in full-growth mode is the ideal time to make repairs. Check edging for any damage, replace rotted woodwork and complete any other maintenance tasks.

As for the plants, prune before the first buds sprout to minimize stress. You can also start indoor seeds, and early spring is the time to divide perennials and plant some hardier vegetables, such as onions and potatoes.

The warmer months may still seem far away, but getting some of your lawn and garden care underway now can make those warmer, sunny days feel closer in no time. Find more seasonal tips for prepping your yard at [eLivingToday.com](#).

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Source: [eLivingToday.com](#)

How to Prepare for Life's Inevitabilities

(Family Features)

Spring offers the promise of warmer temperatures, but with spring cleaning, tax season and other responsibilities, it is also a season for planning.

One inevitable life milestone that requires organization, consideration and planning but often gets overlooked is the end of life, both for one's self and loved ones. It is important to have conversations with loved ones, sooner rather than later, to learn about family history, reaffirm how much they mean to you and gain an understanding of how family members want to be memorialized.

To help families have important conversations about the things that matter and how a person's life story can be meaningfully remembered and honored, the Funeral and Memorial Information Council (FAMIC) created the "Have the Talk of a Lifetime" initiative, which offers families the resources to facilitate these conversations that can be cherished for years to come.

While you are in a groove of filling out paperwork during tax season, take time to fill out FAMIC's checklist, which can be a resource for things to consider when pre-planning a funeral and to help facilitate conversations with loved ones. It offers questions such as:

- * Where would you like your service to be held?
- * Will there be a ceremony? If so, religious or non-religious?
- * How would you like to be remembered?
- * Do you have a specific charity you would like to honor?

Take notes and record your responses as you go through the checklist. Save the checklist in a safe place for when it is needed and to share with future generations. To take your conversations one step further, meet with a local, trusted funeral professional and share those thoughts and ideas with someone who can help you put a plan in place that eases the burden on your loved ones.

Regardless of when it becomes necessary to refer to the preferences and memories recorded in the checklist, you can be grateful you took the time to have meaningful conversations with those most important to you.

For more information and to download the checklist, visit [talkofalifetime.org](#).

By answering these questions and more, families can create a log of loved ones' preferences for how they want to be memorialized. Completing the checklist can take place anytime, not just when a family member is nearing the end of life. Answering these questions can also prompt larger conversations about defining experiences and relationships in a loved one's life.

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Source: Funeral and Memorialization Information Council