



Your Yard

Get Ready for Spring & Summer “Backyarding”: Keep Safety in Mind

(NAPS)—“Backyarding”—the art of taking indoor activities to the outdoors—is a trend that has caught on. As winter begins to wind down, thoughts of playing in and working in the yard often kick into high gear.

Perhaps you are already dreaming of family gatherings, grilling and eating in your backyard. Or maybe you wish to add a yoga zone, design an outdoor movie theater, or build an agility course for your pet this year. Or perhaps this is the year you wish to add a pollinator garden or plant a vegetable or flower garden. Or are you hoping to get that outdoor office setup with extended WiFi?

Knowing the purpose of your yard and how it will meet the needs of your family and pets is a great start to getting “backyard ready” for these warmer weather activities. Also, knowing your climate zone and the mix of trees, shrubs, grass and flowering plants that will grow sustainably is key to designing a dream yard. After all, our yards are not only an oasis for family but also for wildlife and important pollinators such as birds, bees and butterflies.

Now is the time to start planning. Visit your nursery, plant centers, outdoor power equipment service dealers, and/or contact a landscaper, according to the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI).

“Think about how your yard can work best for you, your family, pets and community, but do it now,” says Kris Kiser, CEO and President of OPEI. “And while you’re getting it in top shape for warm weather, remember to keep safety top of mind, especially with your equipment and tools.”

Here are some tips from OPEI to get your backyard ready, safely and efficiently:

- **Take stock of your outdoor power equipment** to help you maintain your yard and make big jobs easier. A lawn mower will trim the grass, but perhaps you might need a cultivator for a garden, a chain saw to take down dead tree limbs, or a leaf blower to



Getting your yard ready now can help you have a great season ahead.

clear debris. Having the right equipment on hand can help you save time and effort if you don’t want to hire a professional.

- **Follow equipment manufacturer’s guidance for safety and usage** of all outdoor power equipment. Look over the manual for your equipment for a refresher on how to safely use it, and read the safety information on equipment manufacturer’s web sites. Review how to shut on and off equipment and make sure safety features are working and have not been disabled. Never disengage or disable manufacturer-installed safety equipment.
- **Remember to keep children and pets away from outdoor power equipment.** No children on mowers.
- **Do not mow in reverse**, and avoid starting, stopping or turning a mower on a slope. Follow manufacturer guidance to the letter on mowing on slopes.
- **Service equipment as needed** and according to manufacturer’s directions. Well-maintained equipment will last longer and run more efficiently.
- **Buy fresh fuel** for gasoline-powered equipment and be sure you have matched the correct battery with the right charger. Use only those batteries that are authorized for your equipment and do not use counterfeits.
- Before working in the yard, **clear the area of dead limbs, sticks and debris.** Inspect trees for damage and clear the work area.

By keeping this information in mind, you can get your yard in its best shape safely.