Dear Neighbors,

The City's Department of Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization is committed to helping you make Lancaster an even better community. It's our job to protect property rights and preserve property values throughout the City.

This newsletter is designed to help you understand your responsibilities and rights as a resident of the City. In this issue we've focused on some friendly tips about how to maintain your property.

Lancaster's Municipal Code requires owners to keep their property in good shape to assure the public's health and safety as well as the overall well-being of the community.

Our Code Enforcement Officers are tasked with overseeing compliance with these ordinances. Usually residents take good care of their property and follow the law. But from time to time, someone will neglect their responsibilities and Code Enforcement is required to take action.

The City prefers to work proactively with residents to handle challenges before they get out of hand. That's why we've put together this set of tips to help you keep your yard in good shape.

Should you have any questions about the Municipal Code or need to report a problem, please visit the City's website at www.cityoflancasterca.org, where you'll find a full copy of the Code as well as online reporting tools.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Brubaker
Director of Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization

inside:

• Xeriscaping – An eco-friendly approach to a beautiful yard
• The War Against Weeds
• Car Heaven...Let them rest in peace!
• Trash Can Cans & Can'ts
• Code Enforcement Means Business Too!
Creativity & Common Sense Can Help Keep Yards in Shape All Summer Long

At times it seems like a bit of a Catch-22. City code requires all property owners to landscape and keep their yards in good condition, yet with our current drought conditions local agencies are encouraging residents to conserve water. Upwards of 80 percent of the Antelope Valley’s water usage takes place outdoors, so the yard is a logical place to start.

How do you keep up the yard while keeping down the use of water? It’s not as difficult as it seems if you use a little creativity along with a healthy dose of common sense.

First of all, make sure you’re not wasting water. A leaky hose bib or broken sprinkler head can send thousands of gallons down the gutter. Next, choose the right time of day to water your lawn and shrubs – for the Antelope Valley, early in the morning is best. Never water when it is windy; it can waste up to 300 gallons in just one watering!

Cut your grass a little longer. Move the mower up a notch and save as much as 1,500 gallons a month. For most lawns, a three-inch height setting for the blade is ideal.

Get rid of the weeds. They compete for precious water and reduce the attractiveness of your yard. A runaway weed problem can also get you in hot water with Code Enforcement. Best bet: tackle them early and often to keep the job manageable.

Use fertilizers containing ammonium sulfate to help green-up lawns. Three or four applications during the spring, summer and fall can keep lawns dark, thick and green year-round.

Consider Xeriscaping. By using native, drought-tolerant plants along with hardscape elements, you can significantly reduce the amount of watering and maintenance your yard requires.

For more water saving tips, visit www.vvwater.org/guide.

All Cars Go to Heaven

If you have an old car just sitting around waiting to be repaired, you can put it to good use by donating it to any of a number of local charities that can benefit from the proceeds. You may also be able to take a tax deduction while steering clear of a public nuisance violation for keeping an inoperable or unlicensed vehicle in your driveway, yard or street.

Lancaster Municipal Code also prohibits any vehicle from being parked on lawns or unpaved portions of your yard. This includes RVs, boats and trailers. If you do not have a suitable place to park your boat or RV, consider renting space in a storage yard or facility. There are several in the area. Check your yellow pages for the one nearest you.

Signs of a Negligent Neighbor

Repeated or continuous existence of the following conditions may lead to Code Enforcement action:

- Turf longer than eight inches
- Grass with many seed heads
- Matted or thatched lawns
- Areas infested with insects, disease or vermin
- Excess dead or dry plant material
- Overgrown plants that inhibit vehicular or pedestrian travel or obstruct visibility
- Trees or shrubs with dead or broken branches
- Large or numerous bare spots in lawn
- Planters or lawn areas overgrown with weeds
- Broken or improperly adjusted irrigation systems that result in significant overspray
- Failure to pick up litter and debris from yard

To report a violation, contact Code Enforcement at 661-723-6121 or visit www.cityoflancasterca.org.
Xeriscaping

Native plants offer a drought-tolerant alternative to thirsty lawns

One alternative to traditional landscaping that is gaining in popularity throughout the arid western states is Xeriscaping – the use of native, drought-tolerant plants along with hardscaping to reduce the need for water and maintenance while still keeping an attractive curb appeal.

Experts recommend that you start with a well thought out plan. Talk with local nurseries, including the local Resource Conservation District Nursery (www.avrcd.org), to get a list of recommended plants, shrubs and trees suitable for our area.

Prepare the soil so that it will drain well and use mulch in bedding areas to help prevent evaporation.

Reduce the size of turf areas as much as possible. Natural grasses and ground covers can provide an appealing open feel, without requiring the water and maintenance that lawns do.

Use an intelligent watering system. Drip irrigation and soaker hoses deliver water efficiently. Set automatic timers to only water as needed. A rain sensor can keep sprinklers from running when rainfall provides adequate moisture. Maintain your yard properly. Make sure mulch is added as necessary to keep beds fully covered. Remove any weeds that develop at the roots. Avoid over-fertilizing and over-watering.

For more ideas on Xeriscaping, visit www.bewaterwise.com.

Turf Battles

Getting the upper hand in the war against weeds

Controlling weeds is the responsibility of every landowner within the City of Lancaster. Weeds not only impact the aesthetics of a yard, but also create a potential fire hazard and breeding ground for pests.

Property owners who fail to control weeds on their property may be cited under the City's Property Maintenance Ordinance (Chapter 8.28 of the Municipal Code) and can even be charged with a misdemeanor that can result in jail time or a substantial fine. Property owners may also be held liable for the costs and expenses of performing the clean-up should they fail to rectify the problem within the designated period (usually 15 days). These costs may encumber the property and may even cause the property to be sold at auction should it remain unpaid for more than three years.

No one wants to take such drastic steps to get a handle on weeds. So here are a few tips to help you get an upper hand on weeds.

- Mow lawn regularly to keep weeds down and prevent them from getting a strong foothold.
- Mowing to a height of around three inches will help lawns grow deep root systems.
- Till flower beds and planters to remove existing weeds. Repeat a few days later to capture the stragglers.
- Place several layers of newspapers down in planters to help create a sunlight barrier. New weeds can't grow without sunlight.
- Place organic mulch in flower beds over the paper barrier. This will help nourish plants and make better use of water.
- Remove weeds when they first appear, preferably by mechanical methods (hand, hoe, or shovel).
- “Weed & Feed” fertilizers are very effective in controlling weeds and the cost is minimal.
- Use herbicides with caution, as overuse can damage the desired plants and run-off can pollute water supplies.

For more tips on weed control, visit the UC Davis Weed Research and Information Center website at http://wric.ucdavis.edu.
Trash service in Lancaster is mandatory and is provided by Waste Management of the Antelope Valley. Each subscriber is provided with one 96 gallon cart for household trash, one 64 gallon cart for green waste and one 64 gallon recycling cart. Please be sure to put the right stuff in the right can.

The green waste can should contain only yard waste such as leaves, grass and plant clippings. The recycling bin should contain only recyclable paper, glass, plastic and metal. Filled trash receptacles cannot exceed 250 pounds, green waste cannot exceed 200 pounds and recycled materials may not exceed 125 pounds.

Bulky items such as furniture and appliances can be accommodated by request free of charge. Contact Waste Management’s Customer Service Center at 661-947-7197 at least one day in advance of your regular pickup day. There is a limit of four bulky items per pickup.

It is your responsibility to make sure that trash cans are out at the curb by 6 am on your designated trash day and that they are properly stored away, once emptied, within 12 hours of pickup. All trash cans must be stored out of view, either inside your garage or behind a fence. Please pick up any trash that may have fallen from the cans when their content was transferred to the truck.

For more information on residential and commercial trash pickup and recycling programs, please visit Waste Management’s site at www.keepingavcclean.com.

**Keep Sidewalks Clutter-Free**

Getting around town on foot can sometimes feel like you are running an obstacle course. The situation can be even worse if you’re confined to a wheelchair or mobility scooter.

The City of Lancaster reminds you that it is important to keep sidewalks, gutters and streets clear for safety’s sake.

Basketball hoops, skateboard ramps, protruding RVs or trailers that encroach upon the public right-of-way (which includes curbs, parkways, sidewalks, gutters and streets) are illegal and can result in fines and confiscation of the encroaching property. Please keep your gear in your yard and put it away when not in use.

Thank you for your cooperation.

**Code Enforcement Means Business Too!**

Code Enforcement rules don’t just apply to residential properties. Businesses within the City must comply as well. Often their rules are even more stringent than those imposed on homeowners.

Commercial property owners must:
- Keep weeds under control on lots and unimproved properties.
- Landscape and maintain improved properties.
- Prohibit parking on unpaved surfaces.
- Keep trash receptacles out of sight.
- Remove litter and debris in a timely fashion.
- Maintain a current City business license.

Special rules apply to owners of apartments and other rental housing. These businesses must obtain a rental housing business license and be inspected to ensure compliance with Lancaster’s Rental Housing Preservation Inspection Program Ordinance. For more information on both commercial and rental housing requirements, please visit the City’s website at www.cityoflancasterca.org.

**Lancaster Redevelopment Agency**
**Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Department**

Chairman  Bishop Henry W. Hearns
Vice Chairman  Andrew Visokey
Directors  Jim Jeffra, Ed Sileo, Ron Smith
Executive Director  Robert S. LaSala
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To learn more, contact 661-723-6197 or visit www.cityoflancasterca.org.