



The Asthma & Allergy Center

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How to Reduce Allergens in Your Yard This Fall

Fungi and weeds can cause sniffles and sneeze

Prepping your yard this fall can give you a head start on spring landscaping, but it can also mean suffering from seasonal nasal allergy. Ragweed pollen and lingering fungal spores can create double the symptoms for some allergy sufferers.

The daunting task of yard work can be favorable for allergy sufferers if they know how to reduce allergens in the areas surrounding the home, according to the Asthma and Allergy Center. Many people think you can only control the environment inside the home, but there are also precautions you can take to help eliminate allergens outside as well.

While completely avoiding pollen and mold is an impossible feat, the following tips can help you breathe a little easier. **Timing is Everything** – The mid-day and afternoon hours might seem like the best time for yard work, but it is the worst time if you have nasal pollen allergy. Pollen counts are the highest during this time, making early morning and evening hours more suitable. Weather can also play an important role. Rain showers can temporarily clear pollen from the air. Thunderstorms, however, can increase airborne allergens, and the standing water left behind is the perfect breeding ground for fungal/mold spores.

Dress to Protect – You don't need to impress while working in your yard, instead dress wisely. Purchase and wear gardening gloves at your local hardware store and your mask while gardening. These will help keep your hands clean and allergens from entering your airways. Wearing large sunglasses will keep pollen and mold from aggravating your eyes. A hat will reduce pollen from sticking to your hair. Also opt for long pants and shirts to prevent skin irritation, while keeping allergy-causing stinging insects away. Wear a mask, too, which will decrease inhalation of the pollen and spores.

Choose Wisely – The worst allergy offenders might be in your own yard. If you are considering adding new trees, grasses and plants into your landscape, be sure they are not the worst offenders. "Flowering" trees and most blooming common flowers are typically safe.

Be Quick to Clean – Mold/fungi and pollen can collect on fallen leaves. Be sure to rake leaves often and wear a pollen mask while doing so, since raking can stir allergens into the air. Continue mowing your lawn throughout the fall and keep your grass short. Maintaining your lawn will keep grass from flowering and producing pollen. If raking and mowing are too bothersome, ask a family member to do it for you. Once you are finished with yard work, remove your shoes before entering your home and be sure to shower right away and wash your hair. Your shoes, clothing and hair can all be allergen magnets. Consider a nasal saline rinse to remove pollen and mold/fungi from the nose.

Taking allergy medication long before you head into the great outdoors can help suppress allergy symptoms before they start. Best to start taking your medication two weeks before the weed and mold season starts (about July) and continue well after the first frost. For those with severe seasonal nasal allergy that is not controlled with medications (antihistamines and nasal steroid sprays), please talk with your Asthma and Allergy Center doctor or PA regarding allergen immunotherapy, also known as allergy shots which may provide great relief.

Thanks to American College of Asthma, Allergy, and Immunotherapy.