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## Prepping for and throwing a great backyard party



Backyards stand witness to many family milestones: the first wobbly ride on a new bike, caught ball, broken bone, and countless other cherished memories. What better place than the backyard to celebrate the major achievement of a graduation.

May is graduation season and coincidentally the month when yards from north to south really start coming into their own. Grass is thriving in the warm spring sun producing lush, vibrant green growth and the first flush of flowering perennials are putting on a show. It's the perfect time and occasion for an outdoor celebration. Here are some tips to help prepare your outdoor space and create an environment the guests and guest of honor will long appreciate.

### Spruce up the Yard

You want your lawn looking its very best for the big party. Fertilizing and spraying weeds can help make for clean, green perfection. But be mindful of timing. The window for these spring tasks overlaps graduation season in many regions.

Weather permitting, plan to apply any fertilizer or herbicides well in advance of the party, preferably a week or more. This will ensure the applications have ample time to give the lawn a nice boost, that any weeds will have died and been mowed, and any odors will have cleared. It's also smart to hold off on tasks like core aeration, which will spread little cores of dirt on the lawn and leave holes that are a hazard to any high heel-wearing guests. If these are services normally contracted out, be sure to put a call in to your service provider to avoid any surprises.

Sharpen and refresh the look of the space by edging the lawn, trimming dead tree branches, putting down new mulch, deadheading any potted flowers, and planting pots and any annual flower beds.

Plan to mow a few days before the party. This will allow grass clippings time to settle into the thatch layer so they won't end up on guests clothing or tracked into the house and avoid watering the grass for a day or two before the party. If you have pets, be sure to make a final thorough inspection of the lawn for any droppings before you begin setup.

### Prepare for Weather

With any outdoor event, weather is an uncontrollable factor. Graduation parties are usually afternoon events that continue for hours as guests come and go. For those perfect sunny May

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days, be sure you have plenty of shade and seating available for guests. Create a variety of seating areas in the shade of trees, on a covered deck, or under umbrellas or a rented tent. Besides keeping everyone cool and comfortable, this allows the graduate to bounce from group to group to greet guests.

Always have a Plan B for if it rains, which is just as likely as sun in May. Large tents can keep the party outside, or make sure the house or garage is prepared to take over as the party venue. If a tent is used, be sure to stake it securely to the ground.

Even the slightest breeze can create problems with décor. That's why for outdoor parties it's best to skip traditional flower arrangements for centerpieces and instead use small potted plants created for the occasion. The weight of the pots and soil mean they won't tip over and they will help hold tablecloths firmly in place if the wind kicks up. Use the graduate's favorite flowers, or match blooms to the class colors. Wrap each pot with some ribbons and poke additional decorations you might see in vase flower arrangements and you have a functional decoration that can give enjoyment for months after the party ends.

### Extra Touches

Graduation is about reminiscing and making new memories. Put together a picture board to display for the guests with photos featuring the graduate's childhood days, passions, friends, and family. Create or find a picture frame with a matte area for guests to sign or leave messages for the graduate. You can use it later to frame a favorite photo from the day. And, finally, prepare to capture new memories. Scope out the ideal spot in the yard for snapping photos of the graduate and their friends. You'll want an area that provides a nice, clutter-free background and [lighting ideal to capture the happy smiles](#).

For parties that continue into the evening hours, hang lights from trees, umbrellas, tents, or any other anchor points in the yard to bring a festive vibe. Strings of clear glass bulbs or solar-powered lanterns swinging from branches make for an elegant touch. Use a few outdoor speakers to add subtle general background music. Or, create a playlist of graduation-themed songs or songs special to the graduate.

Give the guests, especially the younger members of the crowd, something to do when they're not visiting with the graduate. A few yard games like [croquet](#), a ladder toss or a bean bag toss game will provide a welcome distraction. For extra brownie points with the kids, and maybe some nostalgia for the graduate, light up the firepit and provide the fixings for s'mores.

And last, but certainly not least, if you plan to grill don't forget to fill the propane tank!

### Helpful links:



### Your Backyard Tips

Helpful information on how to make your yard beautiful.  
<https://yourbackyardtips.deere.com>

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[X300 Select Series Lawn Tractors](#)

[Residential Z500 ZTrak™ Mowers](#)