

The Garden Corner
By: Art Kammerlohr
Master Gardeners of Johnson County Missouri

The winter of 2019 may break some snowfall records! Don't know if that will happen; but I do know we've had a lot of moisture. Everything has taken a good drink. We've gotten so much; the ground is actually soggy – too wet. As the temperatures begin to feel more and more like spring, I'd like to ask a favor from our gardeners to stay off your lawns and out of your flower and vegetable gardens. And let the soil dry out some. How come? I would wager most of you would answer: soil compaction. And you'd be right.

But, do you know why? To explain that, you have to picture holding a handful of pretty good soil. Half of what's in your hand is made up of minerals, silt, sand, and organic matter. The other half is air. The scientific community call that other half: pore space. Like pores of your skin; except these allow air and moisture to move freely through the soil. That's the kind of soil we all want to see in the garden. So, what about compaction? When we walk or drive or work in soggy soil, we force the "pore space" closed. If we compact it a lot, we will end up with what some people call deadpan. So, if at all possible, do something else on the nice days of spring and let your garden beds or lawn dry out. Need some additional motivation to heed the words of experts? Maybe this will help: "In as little as one-quarter teaspoon (one quarter teaspoon) there are 50 nematodes, 62,000 algae, 72,000 amoeba, 2.9 million actinomycetes, and 25.2 million bacteria." ([reference.com](#)) I don't even want to think about the amount of damage – the populations lost – living quarters destroyed all because of an early spring day in the garden. Do you? ☺ AND! We haven't gotten to the big critters who would also appreciate our letting the ground dry a little – you know: earthworms, bugs, frogs, moles, voles, and snakes.

That was my "plug" for the month: let the ground dry. Got anything specific: write to: 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, MO 64093 or email: maandpak@embarqmail.com and I'll get back with you.