

Landscaping the Yard

A big challenge faced at one time or another by homeowners is how to landscape the yard. It can be difficult developing an overall landscape plan because of a lack of knowledge and feeling overwhelmed when we try to learn what to do. Another difficulty we often experience includes imagining the eventual size of plants at maturity, especially when they are first purchased from the garden center. A drive down almost any street shows where trees have overgrown and heaved sidewalks or driveways, and over-grown shrubs often cover windows and block sidewalks, making it hard to pass. Another common problem is flowerbeds installed in the middle of turf areas that have been overtaken by the grass that surrounds it. However these problems can be avoided with proper planning and some basic knowledge.

If you are new to the whole landscaping thing, it is important to start simple. First, before ever buying any plants, define your specific wants for your yard. Do you want a garden area, do you need a safe place for children to play, do you have neighboring environment that you would like to screen out? These are all things that need to be planned for ahead of time.

The next step is to find any potential problems in the yard that may need to be altered. This should include testing your soil, planning around utility boxes and removing unwanted trees or plants. After fixing or working around problems, find potential plants that will work with your overall plan. With few exceptions, multiple species will suit your needs.

Additionally, one thing that has helped me get good ideas is simply going for a walk and taking pictures of the particular feature in other yards that interest me. After taking several pictures, make a trip to a reputable greenhouse or garden store. Someone there should be able to identify the particular plants you desire, any potential problems can be found and then recommendations can be made on how to install something similar in your own yard. Landscaping and plant selection books can also be valuable resources. Even though the particular plants featured may not grow in our climate, styles from books can be adapted to your yard.

Another option is to attend landscape tours. One tour, called Alterniscapes, featuring several well landscaped homes, is sponsored by the local Master Gardeners and Utah Native Plant Society chapter. Several homes in the Mendon and Wellsville area will be featured. Much of what is at the homes is relatively inexpensive to replicate, and the style of landscaping varies at each location. Additionally, homeowners and volunteers will be at the sites to answer any questions about the yards and horticulture questions in general. Tickets are \$5 per person. For further information about the tour, call the Extension office at 435-752-6263.