



Information

Sheets

Gardening for the Working Couple

With our very busy lifestyles and both the husband and wife working, we tend to have less time for things like gardening. The little free time that we have, it is nice to be able to do the things that you like and not have that nagging feeling that I should be home weeding or mowing the lawn. In this class we will be exploring the products and techniques that can save you time and energy in the garden.

If you are just about to landscape your yard or maybe you would like renovate the existing landscape, here are some things that you will need to find out from the conditions of the site.

1. The first thing that you need to know is actually a question that only you can answer. *What do I need the garden to do?*
These would be the needs that should be considered in the initial study.
2. The first step is to define the public areas from the private areas with in the yard. Is the private area an extension of the indoor living area?
3. Take a close look at the existing conditions of the property. What is the soil like? Sandy, rocky or a heavy clay base! Have a soil test done to find the pH level as this information will suggest what plants will grow best and the less you have to modify the soil, the lower the maintenance.
4. The rise and fall of the land is important, steep slopes are high maintenance areas as well as may create drainage problems for the lower areas. Ground covers should be planted on the slopes to reduce the need for mowing and help with erosion of the soil. You may want to think about terracing the slope with retaining walls for a stepped planting area. Terraces may be an expensive outlay in the beginning but they will provide low maintenance areas in the future.
5. Plants that are not hardy for your area will require special attention and maintenance year after year. You may have some areas that will be identified as microclimates that you can then grow plants that are suited to that spot. (Overly wet, dry, shady or hotter than their surroundings)

6. The maintenance requirements of individual plants is an important consideration. Something so simple as cedar hedging can really make a difference in the amount of time spent on maintaining the different types. The native cedars needing to be sheared two to three times per years to form a formal hedge, while the Pyramidalis or Emerald cedars only require topping. It is best to select plants with low maintenance requirements while still filling the need for colour, texture, density, shape and size. The following types of plants are listed in a descending order according to the amount of care they require;
- espalier
 - annual and perennial flowers
 - lawns
 - ground covers
 - deciduous and evergreen shrubs
 - deciduous trees
 - evergreen trees
7. Avoid planting individual plants in the middle of the lawn; mowing around these is time consuming. By simply connecting the individual plants into a planting bed with a continuous edge will make mowing a lot easier.
8. Group plants together that have similar requirements; water, light, fertility and soil pH. The maintenance will be higher as you attempt to alter the conditions for one or more plants in the garden.
9. Applying layers of organic mulch, such as shredded bark around the plants will enhance their growth, reduce weed growth and erosion of the soil.
10. Having edges on the planting beds provides a clean line between the bed and the lawn area. By using wood, plastic, brick or steel edging, this helps keep the soil and mulch out of the lawn as well as retards weed growth from the lawn into the beds.
11. By installing paved or concrete pathways in heavy traffic areas, this will eliminate those worn patches that always need reseeding.
12. Create rock gardens and waterfalls on steep slopes you will not need to bring in any soil for this project that way.

Try to remember that the time to plan for maintenance is during the design stages if possible. The selection and use of plant material to meet both the needs of yourselves and the conditions of the site are important. The idea is to have the most landscaping with the least effort!

Planning and incorporating a maintenance program that enables you to share the workload will certainly be a step in the right direction to having more free time. The thing about a maintenance schedule is that you must follow it and do the tasks that need to be done at that specific time. Pruning is one of those tasks that needs to be done as each plant may require it, because if you leave it until later in the season, the task will become greater and more time consuming. Applying mulches on a regular bases will not only reduce the amount of weeding that you will need to do, it will also stop the

moisture from evaporating out of the soil, therefore saving your time that you would have to spend watering the plants.

The following is a Planning Checklist

Personal and Family Profile

- How many people are now in your family?
- Do you expect additional children or grandchildren?
- What are the ages of the children?
- Are any members of the family physically limited in mobility?
- What specific allergies do family members have?
- List special gardening interests.
- If you plan to have a vegetable garden, do you plan to grow for fresh use only or for canning and freezing?
- Do you enjoy working outdoors to maintain the landscape? Which maintenance chores are you willing to do yourself, and which will you hire out?
- What are some of your favorite flowers, trees and shrubs?

Family Activities

- What types of outdoor cooking and seating for meals do you need to plan for?
- What size groups will you entertain and need to provide outdoor seating for?
- In which yard games and sports does your family participate?
- How much time do you normally spend in outdoor leisure activities in the yard?

Family service needs

- Do you need a spot for a clothesline?
- Where are the trash cans to be stored?
- What kind of shelter and fencing is needed for pets?
- Where will garden tools and supplies be stored?
- Do you have parking needs for boat, camper, RV or other vehicles?
- Are there unsightly views that need screening?

Future Plans

- List any house additions or landscape feature you plan to add in the future. Hot tubs, pool, gazebo, etc.
- Will fences be added, moved or removed?

By answering these questions you will hopefully have a clear direction as to which way the landscape design needs to go.

Just to recap, here are some important points to remember!

- **simplicity**
- **reduce size**
- **plant arrangement**
- **turf alternatives**
- **hardscape features**
- **use mulches**
- **choose low-maintenance plants**
- **select quality plants**
- **use adapted plants**
- **follow good planting practices**
- **practice preventive maintenance**
- **use the right tools**
- **irrigate various plant zones separately**
- **fertilize in moderation**
- **prune when appropriate**
- **always have fun at what you are doing**