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Landscaping Considerations

By Your Name

Apply bold & small caps to subheadings

April 1, 2012

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Landscaping can be a pleasurable and rewarding experience. However, without proper planning it can quickly turn into a daunting task. The first step in designing any landscaping project is to consider the primary objective. Landscaping can serve many different purposes, from providing shelter from the weather, to attracting butterflies for added enjoyment, to providing beautiful surroundings without over-burdening the environment through too much water consumption. "Your first task, before putting shovel to earth, is to envision your dream landscape. You must decide what kind of space you want to develop." (Erlar, *New Complete Home Landscaping* 2005, 2). This pre-planning step will save time and money as well as ensure the final product provides the right solution for its habitants.

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LANDSCAPING AS A WEATHER BARRIER

When designing landscaping as a weather deterrent, there are a few questions to consider. Is the primary purpose to block unwanted wind? Is to shield a deck or patio from rain, or to provide a shady escape in warm-weather climates. The answer will help determine the most suitable solution. Fences, gates, trees, and shrubs all offer excellent insulation from a variety of weather conditions and also provide added privacy. However, if the objective is to shield a deck or patio from wind and rain, trees or shrubs may be more appropriate than fencing, which can wear over time with water damage.

Landscape garden hedges can be formal or informal but "they should complement landscape designs for which they are planned" (Bramlage 2008). For example, it would not be aesthetically pleasing to use blue spruce pines in a design that is incorporating the natural beauty of a desert landscape.

Time is also a factor when selecting weather-resistant options. Trees or shrubs that take ten to fifteen years to grow may not be suitable options if the desire for a weather-barrier is now. Some excellent, fast growing trees include:

- Willow hybrid¹
- American Holly
- Lombardy Poplar

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¹ These trees grow quickly but do not live very long.

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LANDSCAPING THAT ATTRACTS BUTTERFLIES

Landscape design is not limited to the selection of which plants and trees to incorporate into a given area, or the aesthetically pleasing placement of those items, but also consists of determining what additional components should be incorporated. For example, butterflies offer a peaceful and beautiful addition to any landscape and are easy to attract. A few simple suggestions include:

1. Planting nectar flowers for butterflies and food plants for caterpillars.
2. Planting flowers in abundance.²
3. Selecting flower-species of various heights—some butterflies fly closer to the ground than others.
4. Including flowers that bloom at various times of the year in order to provide a proper food source throughout the entire season.

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In addition to the above steps, it is important to avoid using pesticides in a butterfly garden. “Most of these chemicals are non-selective in the insects that they destroy, be they pests or desirable species like the butterflies” (Schneck 1993, 7). Using pesticides will ensure a butterfly-less butterfly garden.

LANDSCAPING TO MINIMIZE WATER USE

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One final consideration when designing a landscape is to consider not only what it provides for the surrounding environment but also what will it take from the environment. Water-conservation practices have become critical in recent times, as a result more and more people are installing landscapes that use less water to help preserve this valuable resource.

When developing a water-conscious landscape, “Planning is key. Work with the garden’s topography, sun exposure, and soil, and group plants with similar watering needs.” Some additional suggestions include, “Use a drip irrigation system for more efficient watering. Keep in mind that plants require less supplemental watering once they’ve become established. Efficient watering starts not at the spigot but at the sales counter. Choose plants that don’t require extensive watering in your climate” (Erlar, 5 Ways to be Greener in the Garden 2008, 14).

Regardless of what individual preferences determine a landscape design, it is important that the final outcome speaks to the designer and/or homeowner in a way that promotes enjoyment, beauty and functionality for years to come.

² Local nurseries can help you determine which flowers to use.

Bibliography

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bibliography

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