

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Cheryl Armstrong

November is an ideal month to establish or renovate the landscape. A pleasing, low-care and low-cost landscape is certainly attainable for do-it-yourselfers but you need to be aware of some pitfalls if you are to achieve maximum satisfaction.

Homeowners desire a beautiful landscape but are sometimes discouraged by the lack of time and money needed to create and care for the landscape of their dreams.

A pleasing, low-care and low-cost landscape is certainly attainable for do-it-yourselfers, but you need to be aware of some pitfalls if you are to achieve maximum satisfaction. The following are some common mistakes that you should avoid as you make plans for your autumn landscape.

THE "WOS" LANDSCAPING PHILOSOPHY: Avoid practicing the WOS or "What's on Sale" approach to landscaping. It is quite acceptable and appropriate to purchase high quality plants that are on sale. However, do not fall hostage to just purchasing a plant on impulse simply because it's on sale and then deciding later where you might place the

plant or how it might fit in the overall landscape scheme.

WRONG LOCATION FOR PLANT HEALTH: Selecting the wrong plant for a specific location or growing environment in the landscape is a common landscaping mistake. Proper plant selection should include only plants that are well-adapted to our Gulf Coast growing conditions and to the specific location in the landscape (e.g., shade vs. sun, well-drained vs. wet soil).

Be sure to pay attention to the little tag that you get when you buy the plant. Make sure that the plants you select will have the level of sunlight (or shade) that they need to thrive. When it comes to planting trees, you need to remember how big they could get and how much space they are going to need.

The focus of using well-adapted plants applies to your "foundation" landscape plants which can be expected to survive our hot and cold weather seasons. However, it is quite satisfactory to include tropical and subtropical plants such as papayas, citrus, hibiscus, etc. as part of the landscape. If cold weather zaps them, they can be replaced without replacing the entire landscape.

Oftentimes, homeowners see a beautiful plant in a magazine, seed catalog or even a retail nursery and decide that they must have that plant in their yard. If that plant is not suited to its environment, it is apt to die, look bad, or require too much care.

FORGETTING THE VIEW FROM YOUR WINDOW OR SIDEWALK: Homeowners will sometimes place a plant in the wrong location in the landscape. Examples of this are shrubs that get so large that they extend into a sidewalk or block a picturesque view from a window.

It may seem like common sense to think about the view from inside the home but a lot of people forget it. Keep in mind what it looks like from all angles. Place your containers where you want them, and then go inside and look through every major window to see what they'll look like before you plant. It should be like a painting. When you look out, you should see the glass framed with attractive trees



November 12, 2014



Dr. William M. Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.

and foliage.

BIGGER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER: Purchasing the biggest trees is not always a wise investment when landscaping your home. These big trees are especially vulnerable to stress from the digging and transplanting process, and may take 5 or more years to recover from transplanting shock.

Many times, a smaller tree will re-establish itself more rapidly, producing a nicer tree in a shorter time period. With the money you save buying smaller trees, you can get a good start on the rest of your landscape.

High-quality trees are a good investment. Although there is a time and place for 'fast growers', do not overlook the dependable varieties such as many oaks and certain elms and cedars. They will live longer, and you will have fewer insect, disease, and pruning headaches in the meantime.

SCATTER-GUN PLANTING: Even when homeowners select plants that are suited to their environment, they often make the mistake of planting one of everything they can find at the nursery. Too much diversity in your landscape can turn it into mishmash.

A mass planting of one kind of plant will have more visual impact than the same space filled with a scattering of different plants. Repeat some of the same colors and plants throughout your landscape to create a unifying effect.

This overview is not intended to instill paranoia in making improvements in your landscape endeavors. The wonderful thing about a landscape is that the decisions don't have to be permanent. Landscapes should be refreshed and updated to fix problems or to change with your taste and your gardening discoveries. Enjoy the blessings of gardening.

At a Glance

SEMINAR TITLE: Beneficial Insects and Other Creatures in Home Landscapes and Gardens

PRESENTER: Dr. William M. Johnson, Galveston County Extension Agent-Horticulture

WHAT: PowerPoint presentation on beneficial insects and other types of beneficials commonly found in Galveston County

DATE: Tuesday, November 18 at 6:30 p.m.

PLACE: Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in Carbide Park (4102-B Main Street) in La Marque

PRE-REGISTRATION: No fee but pre-registration required (e-mail: GAL-V3@wt.net or phone: 281-534-3413, ext. 12)

