

Managing Your New Landscape

Samuel E. Hand, Jr. and Edwin R. Duke



FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY
**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES

Once design of your new landscape is completed, the appropriate plant materials have been carefully selected (remember: right plant, right place) and the plants properly installed (proper sized hole, proper depth, careful handling and backfill), the process of establishment and maintenance begins (Figure 1).

Establishment can be defined as the time when a plant is able to survive on its own without supplemental care in its typical climate conditions. This is a general statement which applies best to native plants. There is no set time limit for the establishment period. It can vary with plant species, plant size and environmental factors. Successful establishment of landscape trees and shrubs will depend upon the careful matching of plant material selection with the existing site environment, including soil, water, temperature, and weather conditions. The ongoing cost for maintenance of your garden will depend on these choices of appropriate plants and, as mentioned above, will also depend on their proper installation and handling.

Maintenance, after planting, will generally include the following activities and/or elements:

- Watering
- Pest Management
- Fertilization
- Pruning
- Plant Replacement

Watering

Plant choices in the design process will determine the amount and type of supplemental watering your garden will require. Xeriscaping is a planting design process to select plants that are indigenous to the area and that therefore will require little or no

supplemental watering to survive in good condition. This type of design approach will make it possible to require only supplemental hand watering with hose or movable sprinkler during times of drought. More intense use of non-native plant material in your garden may require the installation of a permanent irrigation system, either manually or automatically operated.

Pest Management

Similar to watering requirements, use of indigenous plant material will likely reduce the need for significant pest management. However, use of native plant material does not guarantee that no pest management will be needed. Pests like insects, bacteria, viruses often are introduced into an area by accident, and can become problematic on native species. Use of non-native material will likely increase the need for managing insect and disease problems with insecticides and herbicides to maintain a high quality landscape.

Fertilization

Matching existing soil conditions with the choice of appropriate plant material also may determine the need and frequency for the application of fertilizer. All plants are not tolerant of the same soil conditions. Plant species compatibility with soil conditions, i.e. moisture, pH (acidity or alkalinity), and soil texture and composition, can significantly affect the plant fertilization requirements. Temperature is another major factor in determining the frequency of fertilizer applications. In tropical climates with higher temperatures and increased rainfall, plants typically grow faster and have a higher nutrient requirement.

Samuel E. Hand, Jr., Associate Professor and Director of Industry Credentialing Training Programs, FAMU Cooperative Extension, Tallahassee, FL 32307. Edwin R. Duke, Associate Professor, College of Agriculture and Food Sciences; FAMU Cooperative Extension, Tallahassee, FL 32307.

The Florida A&M University Cooperative Extension Program is an equal employment/ educational opportunity access organization that provides research-based educational information and services only to eligible individuals and institutions regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status.

Pruning

Initial pruning generally involves the removal of dead, dying, broken or diseased portions of a tree or shrub. Then, structural pruning is provided to set the branching structure of the plant. This can be provided during, or immediately after establishment. Long term pruning is provided to control plant size, enhance plant health and maintain the design character intended for the plant. Some gardens are formal and depend upon geometrical plant shapes while others are natural and emphasize the natural character of the tree or shrub.

Pruning also will determine the success of flowering depending on the plant genetics, placement and season of the year. Some plants, like crape myrtles, bloom on new growth, others, like azaleas, on last year's growth. Pruning, improperly timed or placed, may irreparably destroy a significant tree or shrub. Therefore, it is advisable to know how, where, when and why to prune before getting out the cutters.

Plant Replacement

All plants eventually require removal and replacement, whether from age related decline, insect pests, disease, storm damage or other types of injury. They do not all mature or need replacement at the same time. In the average home landscape, it is easy to simply purchase a replacement plant of similar species and let it "grow in". However, in historic or commercial formal gardens, it is common to have a "replacement garden" which has critical plants growing of the same type and age for immediate replacement in case of loss of a critical specimen.

Summary

This publication is a general overview of the significant elements that are involved in maintaining a good quality landscape. It is intended to also point out elements to be considered while designing the garden and selecting the appropriate plant material. Failing to do so will inevitably result in lower garden quality and higher maintenance costs. As noted in

the beginning, failure to properly handle and install the plant material can be just as destructive to the process of producing a successful result. So remember, there are three elements to achieve long term garden success; picking the "right plant for the right place," proper handling and installation, and proper and knowledgeable maintenance over time. If all three are done well, you will have a garden to enjoy over many years.

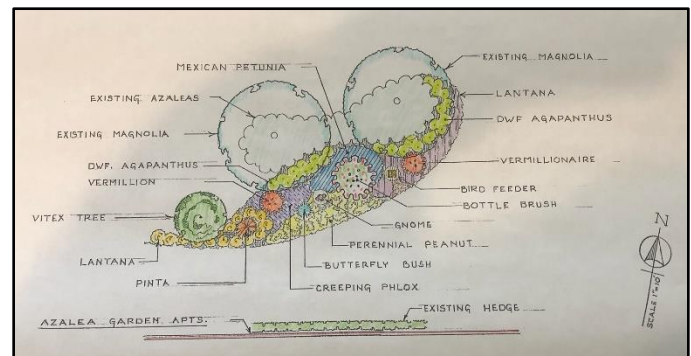


Figure 1. Garden design and its newly planted garden that is still in the establishment phase. Proper installation and maintenance will ensure that the new garden will achieve the intent and character of the original design.