

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



January 23, 2019



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Here are a few common mistakes that you should

avoid as you make plans to improve your landscape over the New Year.

THE "WOS" LANDSCAPING PHILOSOPHY: Over the coming weeks, garden centers, nurseries and similar outlets will be fully stocked with a plethora of plants for home landscapes. 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

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



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).

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.

WRONG LOCATION FOR FOOT TRAFFIC OR WINDOW VIEW: Many times, homeowners will 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.

The scenarios are endless; however, a little bit of planning will go a long way in preventing these disasters. Be sure to note a plant's mature height and width before you place the plant in your landscape. Plants are like puppies—they start off cute and small, but they're going to grow quickly!

BIGGER IS 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 last 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 a 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.

BURYING VS PLANTING PLANTS: Many landscape trees and shrubs start out on negative footing by being planted—or buried—too deeply. Remember to always place the topside of the soil ball of landscape trees and shrubs even with, or slightly above, the existing soil line.

NOT TAKING TIME FOR COMPARISON SHOPPING: When purchasing a sizable number of plants, take time to shop and compare. While many nursery and garden supplier prices are competitive for many products, prices do vary for nursery stock and plant materials. Check several nurseries before buying, to be certain you are getting the best price for quality merchandise.

This overview is not intended to instill paranoia in making improvements in your landscape endeavors. Don't worry about making a major mistake in your landscape as most mistakes can be easily fixed. 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.

