

Good advice can help landscaping

by MARK ROTHMAN
of The Outlook staff

Proper landscaping creates a pleasing outdoor environment for your family, a suitable surrounding for your house, and a source of pride for the homeowner. Most people would like such a landscape — few know how to attain it.

The easiest and fastest way to get an attractive landscape is by hiring a professional to design and construct it. The telephone book lists more than a dozen East County landscape contractors, who will make your lawn a showplace — for a substantial fee.

Mark Hadley, general manager of Soter Companies, Inc., a Gresham landscaping firm, estimates the cost of a total landscaping job at between 90 cents and \$2.25 per square foot. This would include designing, grading and site preparation, retaining walls and concrete work, lawn and plant installation, and professional consultation.

For a standard 7,000 square foot yard, the total cost would be somewhere between

\$6,000 and \$15,000. The end result is guaranteed to be professional, but many people are interested in a less expensive alternative.

The very cheapest alternative is for the homeowner to design and install everything on his own.

John Greenaway, who teaches landscaping courses at Mt. Hood Community College and who was grounds superintendent there for eight years, says people with enough time and energy should consider the do-it-yourself approach.

"I think most individuals are capable of producing a good landscape on their own," he says.

As in any do-it-yourself project, though, amateurs make a lot of mistakes. Drake's 7 Dee's Nursery president Drake Snodgrass says the most common mistakes include planting plants too close together, not providing adequate drainage, and "putting the right plants in the wrong places."

Mistakes such as these could be easily avoided by getting some form of profes-

sional advice on design. Snodgrass says 7 Dee's has landscape architects who will produce a full set of blueprinted plans for a property for about \$400 for an average lot.

The nursery also provides a free advisory service for its customers. Simply bring in a site plan or photographs and 7 Dee's sales people will help with ideas and advice on possible plans. Although the salespeople are experienced in many phases of landscaping, Snodgrass points out they are not professional landscape architects and their advice will not be as complete as that given on professional designs.

Soter's Hadley provides an intermediate advisory service. For \$30 an hour he will visit a property and advise the homeowner on its potentials and pitfalls. "A one-hour visit with a follow-up letter can save someone days of study and reference work," Hadley says.

People planning to do their own landscape installation should be prepared to spend a lot of time on the project. Snodgrass says the average installation can take as long as

130 hours to complete. He believes the best way to go about it is in stages. By working slowly and conscientiously on weekends and evenings, he estimates a homeowner could complete an average installation in two to three months.

For someone with limited time, landscapers can be hired to do only limited aspects of the total job, much the way contractors build a house shell, leaving the finish work to the owner.

Since site preparation can be the most important and physically difficult stage of installation, Hadley suggests homeowners consider hiring professionals to do it.

"I think it's a real good route to go," he says. "Proper site and soil preparation is as important as a solid foundation is on a house. When that is done correctly, the owner can concentrate on choosing and installing the proper plants."

No matter what approach is used, though, experts agree the time for landscaping work is now. For further information on the subject, visit your local library.

Wet winters mean shrubs need more care

A particularly wet winter, such as the one we've just experienced, can leave evergreen shrubs in the home landscape looking a bit yellow around the edges.

Yellowed or washed-out looking evergreen shrubs are in need of some fertilizer to green them up again, notes Ray McNeilan, a Gresham gardening expert.

A fertilizer high in nitrogen, such as a 12-4-8 combination, can put the green back in evergreen shrubs and will help eliminate stunted growth. Apply it at the rate of one pound or two cups per 100 square feet.

Another cause of pale washed-out evergreen

shrubs, is lack of magnesium, which is needed by the plant for chlorophyll building. Chlorophyll gives plants their green color. If the shrub is in soil low in magnesium, epsom salts or a fertilizer containing magnesium sulfate applied at ¼ cup per 10 square feet will help.

Epsom salts can be sprinkled on the surface and watered in or can be dissolved in water and applied with a sprinkler can.

Evergreen and other ornamental shrubs such as arborvitae, camellias, and rhododendrons will grow much better through the summer if they are put into strong healthy condition soon.

Don't be afraid to attack weeds

When possible, it's best to handle landscape weed problems the old-fashioned way — grab a hoe, roll up your sleeves and physically remove the weed from the yard or garden.

However, this may not always be the most practical solution. Where weed problems are widespread in the home landscape, widespread control measures may be needed.

"If you must use chemical weed controls in the home landscape, identify the weed before you begin spraying," suggests Ray McNeilan of Gresham, an

Oregon State University Extension home gardening agent.

Each weed control chemical, or herbicide, is unique in that it is more effective in controlling certain weeds and it must be applied at the right time for best results. If help in identifying weed is needed, contact the local office of the OSU Extension Service, McNeilan suggests.

Weeds that may be a persistent problem in the home landscape include field bindweed (morning glory), Canada thistle, horsetail rush, quack

grass, tansy ragwort, poison oak and blackberries.

Some herbicides that are recommended for control of these weeds are 2,4D amine, dicamba (Banvel), amitrole T (Amitrol-T or Cytrol) dichlobenil (Casoron) and glyphosate (Roundup).

The labels on all these herbicides list the kinds of weed the chemical should be used on, McNeilan says. Also, remember that the old saying, "If a little is good, more is better," isn't true where herbicides are concerned.

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