

## All the right plants in all the right places

Before you buy plants for your landscape, a little homework is in order. Look at where you plan to plant and decide exactly what you need for that spot.

Suppose, for instance, you want to replace some of your foundation plants. First, decide if you need to match the existing plants. If so, replant what's already there, providing most are doing well. If not, then you need to choose a replacement.

Now, how large a plant (height and spread) will the space hold? Plan on keeping plants beneath the window level and away from the house. See if the plant will be in sun or shade most of the year, or maybe a little of both. Look at the soil and the drainage pattern. Is the site sunny but right next to a downspout? Is it flooded from time to time?

The plants you choose will have to tolerate whatever conditions are there. So select plants that will grow where you will put them.

Look at your needs too. Are the plants to be evergreen or produce flowers? Make all these choices before you select the plants.

The same choices apply if you're planting a privacy screen to separate you from your neighbors. How large a screen do you need and how much space is available? How much sun or shade will it have? Will it be exposed to heavy winds? What is the soil like?

Once you evaluate the conditions and space available, choose plants which will satisfy your needs and that will grow on the site.

Most plant references list choices based on size and spread. They tell us if they're evergreen and the conditions where they grow best.

Develop a list of possible plants for the site. Then a visit to the garden center will help you make your final choices. See what a viburnum looks like. Look at the texture of the leaves. Talk about flowering habit and how much shade the plant tolerates. Ask about the plant's mature size and shape. Ask about maintenance requirements. Is the plant salt tolerant if planted along the coast? Is a fast growing tree going to stand up to our winds? Is the plant subject to pest problems?

Many future landscape problems can be avoided by asking the right questions. You might avoid plants that require a lot of pruning or that eventually drop messy fruit everywhere. That gallon sized plant might be just the right fit initially. But how big will it be in five years, ten years...?

Planning before planting can help you choose the right plant for the right place.

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