Evaluate your landscape this fall

Fall is a good time to evaluate your landscape and to make changes based on past performance and need.

Sometimes we put more money in a plant then the plant is worth. There’s a time to step back, evaluate the situation and make a change.

It’s common for grass growing underneath trees to eventually decline. Over time, as trees get larger, they produce more shade than is optimal for grass growth. It’s not only shade that limits lawn growth. Tree roots compete with lawngrass for water and fertilizer. Over time, trees usually win. Some people will fight this battle for years without considering an alternative. Taking time to evaluate your landscape will allow you to at least consider other options.

You could create a mulched bed and forget grass. You could plant shade loving plants such as ferns, mondo grass, cast iron plant, Asiatic jasmine, etc. Containers planted with shade loving annuals such as impatiens for seasonal color placed under a large tree may be more eye appealing than declining grass. There are many options other than insisting on growing grass where it doesn’t belong.

In evaluating a landscape, you may decide to do away with high maintenance plants that no longer seem worth the effort. Consider replacing plants that require routine pruning, watering and spraying with lower maintenance ones.

As you take time to evaluate your landscape, don’t forget to look for good features. Identify good performers, those plants that had few problems. It may be a tree, shrub or a particular variety of a flowering perennial that performed well. You may wish to propagate or purchase such plants to use elsewhere in your landscape.

In a coastal landscape, you may have noticed plants with low salt tolerance performing poorly. With the dry weather this spring, saltwater intrusion in some coastal wells was a problem. Your landscape evaluation may reveal evidence of salt burn in certain plants with low salt tolerance such as azaleas and dogwoods. You may consider replanting with plants that have a higher salt tolerance.

Your observations may lead you to consider using drought tolerant plants in areas where it may be difficult to irrigate. Or you may think of ways to solve landscape maintenance problems that will save you time and money.

The point is to take time this fall to evaluate what has worked and what has not, what you liked about your landscape and what could be improved. An honest evaluation of your landscape now will allow you time to make needed improvements before you find yourself in the middle of another growing season with the same old landscape problems.

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October 23, 2006