

# Add Value, Pleasure To Your Home With a Well-Tended Yard

Do you and your family have fun in your yard — or is it just unused space that means you have a long list of chores every weekend?

A well-planned yard gives you extra room to enjoy without adding a tremendous amount of upkeep. If your yard could use a little love, it's time to make a master plan to add enjoyment and value to your home.

## TAKE INVENTORY

First, walk around your property. Note how your house sits on the lot, where your garage, tool shed, deck, pool or other structure is and what plants you have now.

Think about what you would like to have a year from now. Is it more trees for shade, more grass to play in, a flower or herb garden for cutting, or just reworking an area that takes too much time to maintain?

Once you know what you want, it's time to start thinking about the plants you will need.

## SELECT THE RIGHT PLANTS

A healthy, lush and vibrant lawn or garden starts with your choice of plants. Choose trees, flowers, shrubs and other plants that grow well in your area. This may sound limiting, but by choosing plants that are native or tested to be tolerant of the weather in your area, your yard will require less work and give you better results.

Visit your local garden center, arboretum or botanical garden for advice and ideas. Look for sections that are like your yard, and choose plants that grow well there whether you want



brilliant flowers, ground cover, shrubbery or herbs.

## GET TO KNOW YOUR YARD

It is very important to monitor the cycles of light and moisture in your yard. Late summer is a good time to note where the sun is at different times of the day and to record how much water is available naturally. Watch for areas of day-long shade, and do not put sun-loving plants in those spots.

Likewise, don't put shade plants where they get full

sun all day. In addition, take a sample of the dirt in your yard to a county extension agent or garden center, and ask them to determine the pH and chemical composition of your soil. Your soil's characteristics will have a significant impact on what you will be able to grow successfully.

While you are at the garden center or arboretum, listen for tips such as planting a low water-demand plant at higher elevation. Excess moisture from rain or watering will trickle down from the low water-demand plant to the thirstier plant nearby. In general, selecting disease-resistant, drought-tolerant plants makes sense no matter what you plan to do in your yard.

## ADD SHAPE AND TEXTURE

Two key elements of a beautiful garden are shape and texture. Think of your landscape as a photograph or painting framed by plants. Larger trees and plants belong in the back of your yard, medium-sized shrubs and flowers go in the middle of the visual field and short, smaller plants go in the front.

To give shape to your garden, select a variety of plants with different shapes and sizes.

Texture comes from plants with a variety of leaves — shiny hosta, fuzzy herbs, dull azalea,

prickly yucca or aloe. Also, keep architectural details in mind when you choose plants.

Rough, textured plants will highlight stucco walls, but a picket fence will look better with soft flowers and gentle vines.

**D**on't forget to look at your yard from all angles, including noticing what you'll see when you look through the windows from inside your home.

By taking the time to think through what you want your yard to look like, and noting what your limitations are, you'll have greater success with your efforts. In addition, you'll spend more time enjoying your yard instead of working in it, and you'll see an added benefit when you sell your home: A well-planned landscape adds value to any piece of property.

