

Designing a Northwest Garden
City of Kirkland - Natural Yard Care – Saturday, September 24, 2016



PART ONE – Choosing the Right Plants

Setting Up Your Garden to Succeed

Mapping Your Garden:

- Soil conditions – wet, dry, rocky, hardpan, sandy, clay
- Sun, shade and in between – and when? Morning or afternoon sun?
- Slopes – steepness and erosion control, flooding, dry hillsides
- Aspect – neighboring buildings, what interferes with the sun
- Exposure – wind, reflection, water features, house eaves
- Microclimates in the garden – take advantage!
- Access for maintenance

Imagining Your Garden

- What is the primary use of your garden? Children, animals, relaxing, growing food or more
- Decide on time and funds available to maintain
- Shop the neighborhood for ideas- what works in your area?
- Use the many excellent local resources!

Making a Plan

Choosing Plants:

- Become familiar with USDA and Sunset zone maps
- Group like needs together – wet site plants, drought tolerant plants, sun or shade, sandy or clay soil

- Choose plants that need less water and less maintenance - know a plant's native origin
 - Native plants
 - California and Mexico
 - Mediterranean
 - New Zealand
- Plan for diversity
 - Year round interest
 - Layer the structure of the garden – groundcovers, perennials, shrubs and trees
 - Include plants that attract beneficial wildlife – will help with pest management
 - Include edible plants – perennial and annual vegetable gardens
 - Plants can have more than one function – espalier apple tree fence provides food **and** structure in the garden
- Avoid Noxious Plants!
 - King County and State Noxious Weed Lists
 - The problem with noxious weeds – escaped ornamentals with few control elements in this ecosystem

Plan for Access:

- Identify best places for pathways and entries and exits from the garden
- Place plants that need the most attention closest to the house
- Plan for ease of watering - use an automatic irrigation system, get good tools for hand watering, keep hose bib access clear and near plants
- Establish sitting and resting areas – hammocks, tables and chairs, swings

- Utilities – decide where to place compost bins, curbside bins, dog houses, protect meter access, place a toolshed or greenhouse on site

Start Your Plants off Right

- Healthy soil is key!
- Learn correct planting techniques for each type of plant
 - Avoid girdling roots
 - When and how to plant bare root
 - Loosening a root ball
 - Depth and width of hole relative to the root ball
- Choose the Right Mulch
 - Wood Chips – perennials, shrubs, trees and pathways
 - Leaves – veggie gardens, perennials, shrubs, trees
 - Compost – veggie gardens, annual flower beds
 - Straw – veggie gardens, perennials
 - Manufactured Sawdust and Manure Mix – annual flower beds, perennials, shrubs, trees, paths
 - Gravel – paths
 - Bark – not recommended unless well composted – leaches nutrients, often has added dyes, no nutritive content, compacts and makes water

PART TWO – Why Plant in the Fall?

Setting Up Your Garden to Succeed

- Fall Planting is Beneficial to Plants
 - Soil temperatures are warm – roots continue to grow and plants become established before spring growth
 - Winter rainfall will keep them watered

- Less stress for the plants
- Comfortable working temperatures for you
- Great time to add fall bulbs

Taking Advantage of What Nature Offers

Western Washington's maritime climate brings many blessings for northwest gardeners. The fall season is one of those – winter soil temperatures and winter rain in combination offer a low stress time to really get your garden growing.

- Winter Soil Temperatures
 - Washington State University map – soil temperatures can be checked along with other useful data.
 - <http://weather.wsu.edu/index.php>
- Winter Rains
 - Highest rainfall occurs in November, December and January
 - Lowest rainfall in July and August
 - Drought conditions emerge when spring and especially June is dry
 - Some years dry season extends into September
- Minimize Stress on Plants When Planting
 - Plant in Fall to take advantage of climate
 - Mulch the soil after planting - keeps weeds down but more importantly moderates soil temperatures, allowing the plant to continue root growth to become well established.
 - Always plant the right plant in the right place!
 - To ensure successful establishment
 - To allow for proper summer watering management

- To allow the plant to reach its potential and minimize the need for pruning – constant pruning stresses the plant

- **Plan for Summer Water Needs**

What kind of watering system fits your needs? Fall is a good time to assess how you manage water in the landscape.

- Automatic irrigation systems
- Drip irrigation
- Soaker Hoses
- Hand Watering
- Rain collection systems – cisterns or rainbarrels?

- **Rain Collection**

- Cisterns – disconnect downspouts and allow to fill – provide overflow for storm events
- Rainbarrels – need more than one to make them worth installing – can attach in a chain of them alongside the house
- Puget Sound Starts Here www.pugetsoundstartshere.org has good information about stormwater
- Consult the Garden Hotline for more information about roof surfaces and how to install and use a cistern or rainbarrel

Resources

A Pocket Guide to Herbs, by Jenny Linford; Bath, Paragon Books, @2007

Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest, by Arthur R.

Kruckeberg; Seattle, University of Washington Press, @1996

Maritime Northwest Garden Guide, Lisa Taylor and the Gardeners at Seattle

Tilth; Seattle, @2014

Perennials, the Gardener's Reference, by Susan Carter, Carrie Becker and Bob

Lilly; Portland, Timber Press, @2007

Right Plant, Right Place, by Nicola Ferguson; New York, Fireside, © 2005

The New Sunset Western Garden Book, by the editors of Sunset Magazine;

Oxmoor House, @2012

Teaming With Microbes – A Gardener's Guide to the Soil Food Web, by Jeff

Lowenfels and Wayne Lewis; Portland, Timber Press, @2006

Sprinkler Efficiencies <http://cascadewater.org/irrigation.php>

Great Plant Picks www.greatplantpicks.org

Go-Native King County <https://green2.kingcounty.gov/gonative/index.aspx>

King Conservation District Plant Sales <http://kingcd.org/programs-native-walk-up-sale.htm>

Garden Hotline www.gardenhotline.org 206-633-0224

Monday through Saturday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm