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Things To Think About When Planning a New Landscape

adapted from The Naturescaping Workbook by Beth O'Donnell Young

What I already have

- *What are the problem areas of your property?
- *What are the functional problems with your property? (Example: when it's raining you get wet when you take out the garbage.)
- *Are there features on your property, man-made or otherwise, that you would like to remove?
- *Are there any natural features on your property that you would like to emphasize or enhance (such as an existing pond or stream)?
- *Are there any areas where nothing grows?
- *What would you say are the best features of your property?

Existing Structures

- *What is the style of your house?
- *What are the façade materials?
- *What is the paint color, now or in the near future?
- *What other structures exist on your land?

Your property's history

- *What is the history of your property before the house was built?
- *Do you know the history of your land since the house was built, such as use of pesticides versus organic methods of pest control, or if the land was heavily mulched?

Views and noise

- *What are the visual problems with your property?
- *What are the most important views from inside your house?
- *Are there good views from your property that you want enhanced? List.

*Are there poor views that you want blocked? List.

*Is noise a problem anywhere on your site?

Slopes and drainage patterns

*Are there any slopes on your land? Describe.

*Are there any rock outcrops on your land? Describe

*Do your paved areas drain away from your house's foundation adequately?

*Do you have any lawn areas or planting beds that get mucky or have seasonal standing water?

*Where do your downspouts drain to: pipes and gutters, or a drainage swale?

Patterns of sun, shade, and wind

*What are the seasonal sun and shade patterns?

*Which areas are almost always shady?

*Where are your sun pockets (spots that are usually warmer than the surrounding areas)?

*Are there areas that get too hot in the summer?

*What is the prevailing wind direction, if any? Is wind a problem?

*What are your annual temperature highs and lows?

Utilities and drain fields

*Are there any municipal or utility easements on your property?

*Any underground utility lines?

*Any drain fields?

Your neighbors, human and wild

*Are there any chronic activities of your immediate neighbors that might affect your naturescape design?

*Do your neighbors have concerns that you should take into consideration?

*What kind of wildlife, if any, visits your yard?

What I want and need

How you're going to use your garden

- *What is your vision for your property? Your front yard? Your backyard?
- *How do you see yourself (and other household members, if any) using your outdoor spaces on a typical day in summer? Fall? Winter? Spring?
- *Are there certain times of the year when you are especially interested in your garden? Certain times when you are not?
- *What areas of your property do you expect to be the most well used?
- *If you have pets, do they have special requirements regarding landscaping?
- *Do you need any more vehicle-tolerant surfaces than what you already have?
- *Are there areas where you want or need a footpath?

Material and plant preferences

- *What kinds of materials do you envision using for surfaces and boundaries?
- *Are there certain plants that you really want in your garden for sentimental purposes, but that for other reasons you probably would not choose for your naturescape?
- *Are there any plants that you, or members of your family, just don't like?

Style preferences

- *Of the natural areas that you have visited, are there any that you still remember distinctly? What were they like and how did you feel?
- *Of the gardens you have visited, do you remember one that you really enjoyed? How would you describe it? How did it make you feel?
- *Are there any gardening magazines, websites, or books that you identify with?
- *When you think about various types of gardens throughout the world and throughout time, is there a certain one that you identify with? How would you describe it?
- *Are there any stylistic elements you would like to see in your garden, such as a decorative fountain, a Japanese deer scarer, a bean teepee, or a personal collection?



Principles of Permaculture

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Adapted from David Holmgren's Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability

Permaculture is an approach to designing human settlements and perennial agricultural systems that mimics the relationships found in natural ecologies. It was first developed practically by Austrian farmer Sepp Holzer on his own farm in the early 1960s and then theoretically developed by Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren and their associates during the 1970s in a series of publications.

Central to permaculture are the three ethics: care for the earth, care for people, and fair share. They form the foundation for permaculture design and are also found in most traditional societies. Here are the 12 principles of permaculture as described by David Holmgren:

1) Observe and Interact – “Beauty is in the mind of the beholder”

By taking the time to engage with nature we can design solutions that suit our particular situation.

2) Catch and Store Energy – “Make hay while the sun shines”

By developing systems that collect resources when they are abundant, we can use them in times of need.

3) Obtain a yield – “You can't work on an empty stomach”

Ensure that you are getting truly useful rewards as part of the working you are doing.

4) Apply Self Regulation and Accept Feedback – “The sins of the fathers are visited on the children of the seventh generation.” We need to discourage inappropriate activity to ensure that systems can continue to function well. Negative feedback is often slow to emerge.

5) Use and Value Renewable Resources and Services – “Let nature take its course”

Make the best use of nature's abundance to reduce our consumptive behavior and dependence on non-renewable resources.

6) Produce No Waste – “Waste not, want not” or “A stitch in time saves nine”

By valuing and making use of all the resources that are available to us, nothing goes to waste.

7) Design From Patterns to Details – “Can't see the forest for the trees”

By stepping back, we can observe patterns in nature and society. These can form the backbone of our designs, with the details filled in as we go.

8) Integrate Rather Than Segregate – “Many hands make light work”

By putting the right things in the right place, relationships develop between those things and they work together to support each other.

9) Use Small and Slow Solutions – “Slow and steady wins the race” or “The bigger they are, the harder they fall” Small and slow systems are easier to maintain than big ones, making better use of local resources and produce more sustainable outcomes.

10) Use and Value Diversity – “Don't put all your eggs in one basket”

Diversity reduces vulnerability to a variety of threats and takes advantage of the unique nature of the environment in which it resides.

11) Use Edges and Value the Marginal – “Don't think you are on the right track just because it's a well-beaten path” The interface between things is where the most interesting events take place. These are often the most valuable, diverse and productive elements in the system.

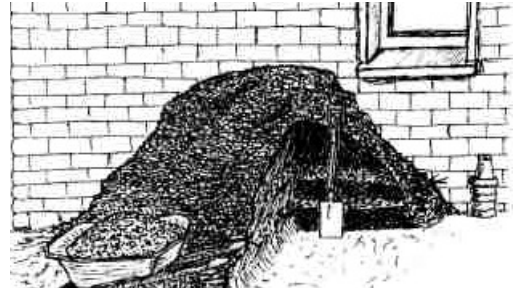
12) Creatively Use and Respond to Change – “Vision is not seeing things as they are but as they will be”

We can have a positive impact on inevitable change by carefully observing and then intervening at the right time.



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How to Make a Compost Pile



Here's what you need:

1. Carbon-rich "brown" materials, such as fall leaves, straw, dead flowers from your garden, and shredded newspaper.
2. Nitrogen-rich "green" materials, such as grass clippings, plant-based kitchen waste (vegetable peelings and fruit rinds, but no meat scraps), or barnyard animal manure (even though its color is usually brown, manure is full of nitrogen like the other "green" stuff). Do not use manure from carnivores, such as cats or dogs.
3. A shovelful or two of garden soil.
4. A site that's at least 3 feet long by 3 feet wide.

Here's what to do:

Start by spreading a layer that is several inches thick of coarse, dry brown stuff, like straw or cornstalks or leaves, where you want to build the pile.

Top that with several inches of green stuff.

Add a thin layer of soil.

Add a layer of brown stuff.

Moisten the three layers.

Continue layering green stuff and brown stuff with a little soil mixed in until the pile is 3 feet high. Try to add stuff in a ratio of three parts brown to one part green. (If it takes awhile before you have enough material to build the pile that high, don't worry. Just keep adding to the pile until it gets to at least 3 feet high.)

Every couple of weeks, use a garden fork or shovel to turn the pile, moving the stuff at the center of the pile to the outside and working the stuff on the outside to the center of the pile. Keep the pile moist, but not soggy. When you first turn the pile, you may see steam rising from it. This is a sign that the pile is heating up as a result of the materials in it decomposing. If you turn the pile every couple of weeks and keep it moist, you will begin to see earthworms throughout the pile and the center of the pile will turn into black, crumbly, sweet-smelling "black gold." When you have enough finished compost in the pile to use in your garden, shovel out the finished compost and start your next pile with any material that hadn't fully decomposed in the previous one.

You don't need a compost bin to make compost. You simply need a pile that is at least 3 by 3 by 3 feet. A pile this size will have enough mass to decompose without a bin. Many gardeners buy or build compost bins, however, because they keep the pile neat. Some are designed to make turning the compost easier or protect it from soaking rains.



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Helpful Books and Websites

Websites

The “You Bet Your Garden” Website - <http://why.org/cms/youbetyourgarden/>

“You Bet Your Garden” is a wonderful call in organic gardening show on WHYY. The site provides a section called “garden answers A-Z,” a large directory of all of the questions that have been answered on the show. This is a great place to consult first if you’re having problems in your garden.

The Cooperative Extension of Camden County - <http://camden.njaes.rutgers.edu/garden/index.html>

This is a good place to consult about problems with specific plants and to stay informed about interesting horticulture events in the area.

Bartram’s Gardens - <http://www.bartramsgarden.org/>

Consult this site to stay informed about the great horticulture events they host at Bartram’s Gardens.

The Native Plant Society of New Jersey - <http://www.npsnj.org/>

The NPSNJ provides a thorough list of plants native to this region and hosts interesting events.

Information on Raised Beds - <http://organicgardening.about.com/od/startinganorganicgarden/a/raisedbed.htm>
<http://www.sunset.com/garden/perfect-raised-bed-00400000039550/>

These two sites provide all the information that you need to build your own raised bed. It’s simpler than you think!

Helpful Books

Bringing Nature Home by Douglas W. Tallamy

This is by far the best book that we’ve found explaining the reasons for using native plants. This is not a great guide for the specific native plants to be used in this area. That information can be found at the website for the Native Plant Society of New Jersey.

Gaia’s Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture by Toby Hemenway

This is the most practical and hands on permaculture guide that we’ve found. More and more permaculture books are coming out each year, but many are heavily theoretical and difficult to apply. You can’t go wrong with this one.

The Naturescaping Workbook by Beth O’Donnell Young

The perfect guide to redesigning your own yard using some permaculture principles.

Right Plant, Right Place by Nicola Ferguson

This is one of the most important books for landscape design. It meticulously catalogues 1,400 plants based on their needs.

The Sunset Western Garden Book

Provides great info and photos for well over a thousand ornamental plants.