



My Yard – June Manageable Landscapes

Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, plantnebraska.org

Gardeners tend to start out the summer energetically and optimistically. Cool temperatures and good rains means our yards may be weedy but they're lush and green and blooms are lasting longer than usual. No matter what the conditions, almost all of us want yards that provide a maximum of enjoyment with minimal effort. Selecting the right plants and putting them in the right place can go a long way toward enjoying them all through the year. A few tips:

- Group plants that need similar conditions. Woody plants are used to growing close together and protecting one another from extreme weather. Massing plants with similar needs for moisture, care, exposure and soil type will shelter them, minimize mower damage and reduce the need for watering.
- Right tree, right place, right way. For maximum growth and vigor, select a good quality tree to match your site, avoid utility lines and plant it at the correct depth.
- Plant deciduous trees and shrubs west, south and east of buildings for summer shade and plant evergreens north or northwest of buildings to decrease winter winds. Conifers are most effective planted away from buildings at a distance of 1-3 times the height of the trees. Correctly placed trees can lower air conditioning bills 15-50 percent and heating bills 25-40 percent.
- Carefully prune trees while they are still young to develop good branch structure and because it's much more difficult when they are older and taller.
- Either place plants close together or cover them with 2-3 inches of mulch to conserve water, decrease temperature fluctuations, reduce weeds and increase organic matter. For trees, keep mulch away from the trunk and mulch to the dripline.
- Only fertilize for known deficiencies. Excess nitrogen encourages top growth at the expense of root health.
- To minimize maintenance, use shrubs that look best unpruned.
- Compost garden debris and use it on-site to improve soil and limit waste.
- Include a diversity of plants, including native plants, for hardiness, pest and disease resistance and to provide food and shelter for wildlife.
- For yourself and wildlife, include some edible plants—vegetables, fruits, nuts—in the landscape.
- Plant groundcovers on hard-to-mow slopes to prevent soil erosion and for ease of maintenance.