

Landscape Tips

from A to Z

Justin Evertson, Green Infrastructure Coordinator

“Make room for a bit of a wild area in your yard where you don’t fuss about the weeds as much. The rough edges are where some of the best biodiversity and sustainability takes place.”



Hanna Pinneo, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Interim Executive Director

“Putting a rain gauge where you’re watering with a sprinkler gives you a more accurate idea of how much you’re watering. It’s especially helpful with trees that don’t normally show their lack of water until later. And for new gardeners: Good, sturdy tools are worth the money but stick to the basics like pruners, trowels, rakes, good shovels, etc. And remember that anything that seems too good to be true almost always is.”

Bob Henrickson, Horticulture Program Coordinator

“No matter the site, it’s always a great plan to do some soil amending to break



up compaction and add organic matter to make sure your new plants are in well-drained soil... and it makes planting sooooo much easier.”

Lucinda Mays, Chadron State College Arboretum Curator

“To freshen the look of your landscape right now and on into autumn:

First – to garden like a pro, round up a tarp. Any garden cleanup gets tossed onto the tarp as you work, giving you a beautifully groomed result the minute you haul the tarp away.

Second – pay attention to edges of beds and lawns. If the edges are well-kept, the rest of the landscape looks well-kept, too.

Finally – tackle one small task at a time (unless you have a crew!). Do one small task, finish it up, sweep up after yourself, and enjoy the immediate improvement you have made.

Here’s a list of easy-to-accomplish tasks that add up to a well-tended late summer and autumn landscape. Most take just a few minutes.

Shear back bedding plants (like petunias) to encourage re-bloom. Take off about a third of the plant.

Add slow release fertilizer to beds and pots of annuals, perennials and ornamental grasses. Look for granulated fertilizer formulated to last three months in the landscape. An organic option is to side-dress the plants with a half inch layer of compost.

Brighten up your entryway with a large container (at least the size of a 5-gallon bucket) planted with newly purchased annuals, fall-blooming perennials and grasses. Put bricks in the bottom of the pot to keep it from blowing over.

If your planted containers are drying out each day, give them a deep watering around 12-1pm instead of



watering twice a day. Use a shallow pan under each pot to catch runoff.

Add mineral supplements (not fertilizer) to trees and shrubs. Pelletized agricultural sulfur from a farm store and chelated iron from a garden center are good additions to alkaline soils (common to western Nebraska). Sulfur and chelated iron will slowly and steadily improve foliage color

Continued on next page

Tips continued from previous page

on yellowing trees and shrubs. Follow package instructions for how much to apply.

Raise the deck on your lawn mower to its highest setting. Taller



grass blades shade grass roots, thereby using less water, and give the lawn a lush look.

Cut a sharp and shallow edge in turf along beds, sidewalks and driveways. Get best results from using a flat-bladed spade or share or rent a powered edger with friends and neighbors.

Use a file to sharpen spades and shovels. A well-sharpened spade slices through roots rather than pushing through them with blunt force. A good all-purpose file is an 8-10" single-cut bastard file with a handle. Single-cut means the file teeth go only in a single direction, and bastard means medium roughness of the teeth on the file. Plus it's fun to say.

Cut suckers that arise from tree roots. Don't spray the suckers with herbicide; that will affect the tree as well as the suckers.

Whoa, Nellie! Wait until March and April to prune anything else green from your trees and shrubs. It's ok for the tree if you cut out dead wood at any time. Put down a 4" layer of wood chips or pine needle mulch around trees and shrubs. Keep the mulch away from the trunk but otherwise even in depth all the way to the edge of the mulched area, giving a tidier edge where the mulch meets the lawn.

Choose a favorite color of paint to mark the handles of small, easy to misplace hand tools.

You can garden like a pro – just remember to use a tarp, pay attention to edges and tackle small seasonal tasks one at a time."

Graham Herbst, Community Forester Specialist

"My garden doesn't look great this year, but I am really glad I used logs to line my path so I can mulch it deeply and reduce



weed pressure. Did I pull a few borage before taking these pictures. Yes.

Mulch is a good thing, but I like to plan for the mulched spaces to disappear as perennial plants fill in the space. Nature abhors a vacuum, so if you don't fill your garden beds with plants you love, other plants will do it for you."

Bob Feurer, Retired Science Teacher and Curator at the Franklin- Cotterell Greens Arboretum in North Bend

"My best tip is the Hula-hoe or stirrup hoe. Great for ordinary weeding in the garden or for wood-chipped beds. It pulls through the plant roots and lets the woodchips glide through the opening above the blade with minimum disruption of chip cover, and reaches in under shrubs to get those pesky hiding ones. By far the most-used hoe I own."



Sarah Buckley, Program Coordinator

"When you're planting wildflowers, go light on the mulch and avoid areas where snow gets piled in the winter. My happiest wildflowers are growing on a slight mound with a very thin layer of mulch, in the backyard where we don't use any ice melt or salt."

Alan Roesler, Park Supervisor & City Forester for the City of Kearney

"I think most of us know about the benefits of mulch for trees, shrubs, perennials and other plantings. It can probably be used most effectively in massed beds and, especially for young trees, it can prevent damage from mowers and string trimmers. It also cuts down on the woody plants' competition with turf in the top 6" or so of the soil profile, stabilizes temperature extremes, inhibits weed seeds' germination, conserves moisture and, if done correctly, enhances aesthetics as well.

Further regarding the aesthetics, the real 'tip' is about colors. First off, try to avoid shiny-new, freshly ground wood products (like ground up pallets) which may be the cheapest mulch to purchase but are high in carbon content and low in nitrogen so it can draw nitrogen from the soil and upset the soil's carbon/nitrogen balance to the detriment of plants. As for other colors, personally I like natural-looking mulch that lets the plants be the visual focus. Why? Because red fades to pink; black gets too hot and fades to gray; and dark brown fades to natural brown—so why not just start there?

If you can find locally sourced mulch made from whole branches and trees, the 'stringy' parts will help knit it all together

and stay in place better during our famous wind and ‘frog-drowner’ rainstorms. Natural, locally sourced ground-up wood waste is also more sustainable, accessible and usually cheaper or even free at landfills.”

Karma Larsen, Communications Associate

“For composting, keep it simple. It doesn’t require a complicated system. Just dig a hole somewhere out of sight, fill it



with kitchen waste, add some water and cover it back up with soil; moisture and worms will break it down within weeks. Trench composting is much faster than dry, aboveground methods.”

Chrissy Land, Community Forester Specialist

“Use pre-emergence anywhere you can to help reduce your management load later in the season. It works by dissolving at the surface and seeping into the top few inches of the soil, creating a ‘burn barrier’. Any seeds that germinate and try to grow through this barrier are essentially burned, thus killed before they can even break the soil surface.”

Carol Evans Lynch, *Curator of CABG Patch Landscape Steward Site, Master Gardener Emerita

*Constantly being reminded that I am not in control.



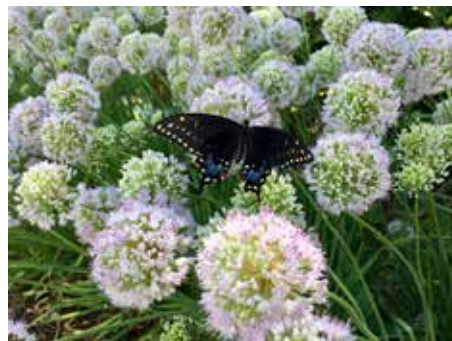
“This is what
I’ve learned..

A landscape is never static but constantly evolving. Therefore, things need to be redone, replaced and rethought. Trees reach the end of their lives—and after a proper period of mourning, you have the opportunity to plant a new legacy.

What is considered to be good planning and design changes, so allow the landscape to evolve with new discoveries. Work with a sense of the place where you reside.

Weeds will always be with us—figure out how to live with some of them. You will live longer and with less frustration.

Be in awe of and honored by of all the scaly, feathered, furry, many-legged,



crawling, winged, slithering, hopping, walking and flying creatures that reside in your landscape. Be tolerant of them and thankful that they have made their home with you. Enjoy observing their lives.

Most of all, take time to enjoy what you have accomplished with the good grace of Mother Nature. The work will still be there tomorrow.”



Carol Evans Lynch and husband Bob own and manage one of NSA's private arboretums in Omaha's Ponca Hills.

If you're interested in joining our statewide network of gardens, either as a private or public site, visit plantnebraska.org/who-we-are/affiliate-sites or email arboretum@unl.edu.