

# Planning is key when landscaping a yard



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**Q**uestion: We just bought our home last year and are trying to landscape it, but almost everything I plant dies. Why?

**Answer:** I cannot tell you specifically without more information, but I can tell you the most common mistakes people make in landscaping their homes. These are in no particular order, except the first two. If you plan your garden and take into account the functions you need, your odds of success will increase.

**Failure to plan:** Plan and budget for your landscape. Know what you will plant in each part of your yard and why. Do you need relief from a hot sun in the summer? Do you need privacy? A wind-break? Do you like lots of color? Do you prefer low-maintenance?

**Function:** To get maximum enjoyment from your yard, plan a space for your activities. Do you need someplace for the kids to play, for you to barbeque or to grow vegetables or flowers?

**Know your plants:** It's



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**Mulch is attractive and important for suppressing weeds and keeping moisture in the soil.**

important to know your plants' mature height and width before planting. Also, make sure that where you plant has the right sun requirements for your plant. Doing these two things will save money, time, energy and frustration.

**Not reading plant requirements:** Each plant has specific requirements to keep it healthy. Make sure you are planting it where it will thrive. Take into consideration sun, water and fertilization requirements and put like plants together. It will help to save the identification from each plant you purchase so you may refer to it later if needed. Also, this allows you to do further research

on the plant for more detailed care.

**Over or under watering:** Again, this goes to knowing what your plant requires. Some people water at night because they think it saves money – it doesn't. What it does do is make your plant more susceptible to a fungal disease. It is preferable for plant leaves to be dry before nightfall.

**Overfertilizing or fertilizing at the wrong time:** This usually happens because we assume that more is better. In ice cream, that is true. It is not true, however, for fertilizing. Over-fertilization can burn the plant and wastes money. If you fertilize when dormant the

plant cannot utilize the fertilizer.

**Not planting strategically to save energy:** Landscaping is not just for looks. If properly done, trees and shrubs insulate the home in winter and shield it from the sun in the summer resulting in a more comfortable home and some cost-savings.

**Not mulching:** Mulching is one of the most important things you can do for your plants. It keeps weeds at bay, keeps roots moist (requiring less water) and protects roots in winter.

**Planting under trees:** Many times what has been planted underneath the tree has different watering requirements than

the tree itself. This usually results in overwatering and can eventually kill the tree.

**Improper or no maintenance:** Your yard needs proper weeding and pruning. Weeds take water and nutrients from your plants and crowd them out, ultimately affecting growth. Proper pruning improves the size and quality of fruit and keeps trees and shrubs healthy.

**Lack of variety:** When too many of the same plants are used, not only is it

boring, it invites disease and it can leach nutrients from the soil. Plants take nutrients from the soil, so if many of the same plants are fighting for the same nutrients, it will be difficult for the plants to succeed.

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*Do you have a gardening question? Please email, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Plant Clinic at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu), 541-236-3052, or 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg.*