

Although it doesn't seem like it, the days are getting longer and spring is getting closer. Whether or not the groundhog will say six more weeks of winter, or spring will be here early, I don't know. I definitely know which one I'm hoping for though. Either way, we've got a few months before we can safely plant outside and not worry about the frost, but that doesn't mean that there isn't garden related activities that we can be doing. Now would be a very good time to plan your garden for 2020.

If I were to plan my garden for the year, the first thing that I would do is look back at my garden from the previous year, if I had planted one. I'd take note of which plants did well and which ones didn't do well. For the plants that did well, do I want them in my garden again, or did they try to take over the entire area? Looking at the ones that didn't do well, personally I would try to figure out why they didn't do well. Some plants just aren't well adapted to the heat of a Nebraska summer, but if a shade plant was put in a full sun location, it won't do nearly as well as it would in a full shade spot. Now that I have a pretty good idea of what areas might need plants, and what kind of sun and water that those plants will receive, along with which plants are doing well where they are currently located, I'm one step closer to being able to start looking at what plants I might like to have in my garden and landscape this year.

The next thing I would do is map out my garden, keeping it to scale. I would make note of what areas are full sun, meaning that the area receives at least six hours of sunlight per day, part sun/shade, receiving between three and six hours of sunlight, and full shade, which is less than three hours of sunlight per day. I would also mark which areas are irrigated, and which are not. By creating a map, I can have a visual representation that shows me how much space I have, what kind of plants that I might need for those areas, and how many plants I might need. If you aren't someone who needs a visual representation, you could just take a walk through your garden and landscape areas, to review what adjustments it might need for the next year in order to look its best.

Around this time of year, many of the major plant distributors will start to send out catalogs. These catalogs are a really great way to look for new plants, because most have beautiful full color pictures of what the flower or plant should look like, and list what kind of conditions that they need to grow the best, as well as how far apart they should be spaced when planted. Some also list when the plants will flower and for how long, which is helpful when trying to get the longest bloom time possible out of your garden.

This time of year is a good time to think about your garden for the upcoming year. I would start by looking back at my garden and landscape from the previous year, and reviewing which plants did well and which ones struggled. I would then create a map of my garden, so that I would be able to more easily figure how much space I had to fill, and what kind of plants would do well in those areas. Lastly, I would turn to the seed catalogs to help me determine what new plants I might like to try this year. If you have any questions or would like to suggest a topic for me to write about, feel free to contact me at the Buffalo County Extension Office, at 308-236-1235, or at mearnest2@unl.edu.