



Simplify Your Garden

During the busy summer season, our best spring intentions can fall by the wayside. Weeds creep into carefully planted flower beds, trees and shrubs go un-pruned, and fruit trees don't get sprayed- all for lack of time. Does a beautiful landscape always require hours of intensive care to achieve and maintain? Of course, some maintenance is a must, but a low maintenance landscape is possible with good planning.

Eliminate Problem and High Maintenance Plants

As you evaluate this spring's landscape, are there plants that are continual problems? A rose constantly defoliated by black spot? Lilacs with severe powdery mildew? Your best long-term solution is to replace them using plants with greater disease resistance or better adaptation to the site, so opportunistic diseases like powdery mildew aren't a problem.



Also consider the types of plants in your landscape. On a scale of high maintenance to low maintenance, annuals are highest, perennials mid-range, trees and shrubs lowest. Take an inventory of your current landscape, and gradually transition to lower maintenance plants where possible. Masses of annual flowers are beautiful, but expensive to purchase each year and time consuming to plant and maintain. Consider reducing the amount of annuals in your landscape, using them sparingly in high visibility locations for pops of color.

Additional problematic plants to consider replacing include those fitting the following descriptions.

- Grow too quickly for their location or have a formal shape and need to be pruned several times during the season.
- Reseed themselves everywhere and are a constant source of irritation. Sometimes called garden thugs, common culprits include garlic chives, borage, rudbeckia, phlox and yarrow to name a few. But whatever the plant, if it spreads itself throughout your gardens to the point it increases your garden workload it may be time to remove it completely.
- Plants with "lazy" stems that flop down in the garden, thus requiring pinching or staking. Some ornamental grasses, Russian sage, tall sedum, and many others fall into this category. If the extra work is not worth it to you, consider other choices.
- Require frequent deadheading to look their best, such as balloon flower.

More Tips for Simplifying Your Landscape

Mulch is your best friend! Maintain a 2-3 inch layer throughout your garden beds to drastically reduce weed seed germination. Mulch improves soil as it degrades, creating a better soil environment for your plants. Just don't pile it up in a mulch volcano beneath your trees- remember a flat, even layer.

Preemergent herbicides are a huge time saver. Paired with a good mulch layer, these two products provide the

highest level of preventive weed control. The most commonly available traditional preemergent herbicide for landscapes is trifluralin, found in Preen and many other products.

Corn gluten meal is an organic option for those gardeners wanting to use natural products or steer clear of traditional garden chemicals. Look for it in products such as Preen Organic, Concern or Wow. I use corn gluten meal to reduce seed germination under my bird feeders; it stops spilled sunflower seed from germinating, but is not harmful to birds that eat it.

Need More Help With Landscape Questions?

Join me at one of these spring gardening programs. Cost \$5.00 per person. Preregistration requested by calling (402) 441-7180; the program will be cancelled if 5 or fewer participants are registered.

Made in the Shade – Trees for Nebraska Landscapes.

Date: June 4, 6:30-8:00 pm. Register by May 31.

Location: Otoe County Extension Office, 620 1st Street, Syracuse, NE

Trees are the backbone of our landscapes, providing beauty, shade, noise reduction, wildlife habitat and reducing home heating and cooling costs. In this program, learn how to keep your trees healthy and vigorous. We'll also discuss tree species well-adapted to Nebraska's challenging growing environment

Troubleshooting the Landscape

Date: June 13, 6:30-8:00 p.m. Register by June 10.

Location: Cass County Extension Office, 8400 144th Street, Weeping Water, NE

Learn how to better manage these common problems in your landscape: Emerald ash borer, weed control in lawns and landscapes, summer and fall lawn care, and pruning trees and shrubs.

Your Suggestions are Welcome!

Is there a lawn and gardening topic you would like to learn more about? Sarah Browning is an Extension Educator with Nebraska Extension and can be contacted by phone 402 441-7180, by mail at 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln, NE 68528: or by e-mail sarah.browning@unl.edu.

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