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Jamie's Tips for your landscape

On this page you can find some tips on the following:

- An annual assessment to evaluate your yard
- Basic design
- Watering guidelines

Annual Assessment

Doing an annual assessment is a great idea to ask yourself questions about your landscape that otherwise might go unnoticed. Walk through your landscape and ask yourself these questions:

- Are there any sickly plants that should be removed or replaced?
- Have any plants grown too large for where they are planted? Should they be cut back or removed?
- Have plants grown so large that they are hiding your house or windows?
- Have plants by the entryway grown so large that they are hiding your entry lights or house number?
- Do you have any lawn areas dying from too much shade?
 - Would a shade tolerant grass or ground cover work there?
- Are any of your beds out of proportion for what is growing there? Sometimes you have fixed constraints concrete etc., but other times you can reposition borders.
- Do any of your beds look too busy or too plain? Adjust the variety of the plants.
- Do you have any plants in high focal areas (especially entry way) that die completely back in the winter? Could these be transplanted to another area of your landscape and replaced with something that looks great year round?

Decide which projects to tackle now and which to re-evaluate next year.

Basic Design

Your goal should be to mix different shades, hues and textures of plants into a presentation that is pleasing to the eye. The challenge is to do this without ending up with a large collection of plants that looks too confusing and busy. Here are some suggestions that may help.

Tall Growing Shrubs/ Ornamental Trees

These are the anchors or specimens of your design. Nobody is going to say "that's a lovely Indian Hawthorne you have there!", but they will notice and comment on your specimen shrubs and ornamental trees. Plant in a location where they can excel and be shown off. At either end of the home and/or between windows (if space allows) are good places to start. Plant taller growing shrubs and ornamental trees a minimum of 6 – 8 feet out from the house. A common mistake is to plant them where they look good when they are saplings, 3-4 feet from the house.

Medium Size Plants/Shrubs

For the rest of your beds, consider using evergreen shrubs as the backdrop. That way, even in the winter, when your flowers and perennials die back, your yard will still have the pretty shrubs to fall back on. In front of the shrubs plant showy annuals, perennials,

ornamental grasses and place a few small moss boulders. Mulch the areas between plantings

Variety

While too many of the same plants can look monotonous, too *much* variety in one area can look equally unappealing. Clustering similar shrubs together (in groups of 3, 5 or 7 depending on area) is the best solution. Don't plant too close together, follow the guidelines on the labels and allow the plants room to grow.

Add Some Color

Annual and perennial flowers are they best way to bring color to your yard. You can, but you don't have to spend a fortune or the whole weekend planting to add color to your yard - just a few flats of annuals spread through your landscape can make the world of difference.

Tip: This is the #1 tip I give to homeowners wanting to improve drive up appeal in a simple, affordable way: If plants by the entryway of your home have grown so large that they completely fill the beds, a fast and affordable makeover is to remove these plants (or just the ones in the front if you have more than one layer) and replace with a small bed of annuals on each side of the front door. People have been amazed with how much drive up appeal this simple tip can create.

Watering Guidelines

Monitor the Irrigation

A commitment to careful monitoring of your irrigation system will ensure your plants have the best possible chance to thrive.

How often? How long?

It seems everybody under the sun has a different opinion of how much and how often to water! Different opinions will come from different expectations. I find it important to state that that my expectations are that all your plants and turf will grow healthy and look presentable using the minimum amount of water possible. The following are suggestions to initially program your system. Adjustments may be necessary depending on water pressure, heads per zone, head spacing, etc. If your lawn is in bad condition, it may also need additional watering to nurse it back to health.

Watering Guidelines

Month	# of Days per week to water*	Duration **	Average Daily high	Av rainfall
Jan	Off***		54	1.90
Feb	Off***		60	2.37
March	Off***		68	3.06
April	2	15min	76	3.20
May	3	15min	83	5.50
June	3	20min	91	3.23
July	4	20min	95	2.12
August	4	20min	95	2.03
September	3	20min	88	2.42
October	2	15min	78	4.11
Nov	Off***		65	2.57
Dec	Off***		56	2.57

* Reduce by one day for each day it rains. A rain shut off sensor will do this for you. They can be retrofitted to any older system that doesn't have one.

****Important:** all times are for stationary heads. If one or more of your zones has rotors you will need to do 3 times these times (in just those zones) to put a comparable amount of water down. Rotors typically cover large lawn areas and the longer times are necessary to meet design specifications. Many newer sprinkler systems have both rotors and stationary heads within separate zones. Make sure you know which kind of heads you have in each of your zones.

******* Watering in the winter is usually not necessary – only benefiting disease, bugs, and weeds trying to take hold in your lawn. Run on manual for 15 minutes per zone only if it's dry for 2 weeks and there is no rain in the forecast.

Misc. Watering Notes

Watering everyday is only necessary for some annual flowers that demand it, new plantings, or a lawn you are trying to nurse back to health. Your bushes and lawn do not need the extra water. It will only make them more appealing to bugs and disease.

If any of your zones are on an incline and water runoff is a problem, try programming the system to run twice by setting two 'start times' an hour apart. Decrease the run times by 50%. You will use the same amount of water, but with less run off.

The best time to water is first thing in the morning*

In the midday you will lose too much to evaporation and it can scorch your plants

In the evening it will leave things wet all night leading to disease problems

In the middle of the night you won't notice a broken sprinkler head

*Make sure you are in compliance with any restrictions your city may have on when you can water.

Rain shut off sensor

Adding a rain/freeze sensor to an existing system will help you manage your irrigation. It will shut off automatically during or after a rain and it will remember to start up again a few days later. It will save water and will increase the health of your plants.