

From the Ground Up

A Gardening and Native Plants Quarterly

Colorado State University Extension-Pueblo County

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Right Tree, Right Place

By Catherine Burst, Colorado Master Gardener, 2018

Trees are a precious gift on the plains of southeastern Colorado. In wilderness, they are only found in riparian corridors along the occasional creek or riverbed. Their rarity draws our attention and appreciation when we are traveling, and they remind us that in our region, they represent the life-giving presence of water. Until the advent of hose bibs and irrigation systems, having a tree in your yard either meant hauling water to it, or hoping that plentiful rains would keep it alive long enough to establish a strong root system.

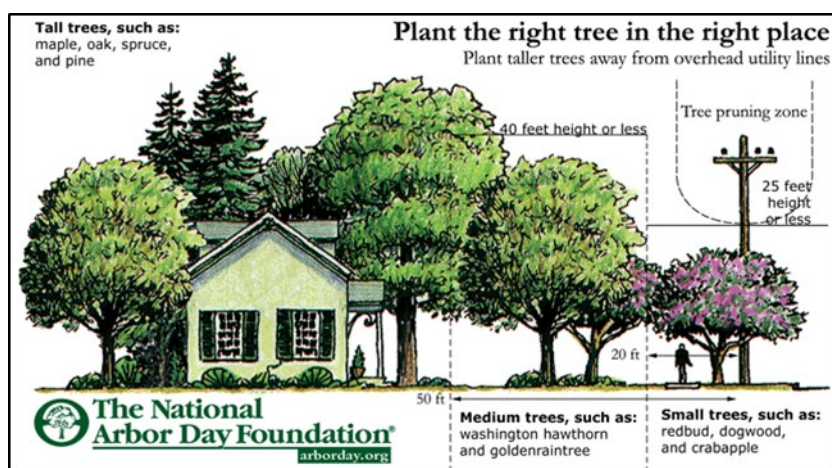
Access to water is still the most critical component in a young tree's life. And so planting the Right Tree, one that is reasonably well-adapted to dry conditions, alkaline soil, temperature extremes and gusting winds, in the Right Place, where we can get water to it until it is established, is as important as it has always been. But living in an urbanized environment adds increasing complexity to the factors that will impact a tree's health and longevity, such as proximity to structures, utility lines and curbs, and the microclimates created by sun and wind. Planting a tree is a good decision, but planting the right tree in the right place is what will make the difference between a happy, healthy tree and one that is stressed and short-lived.

Trees provide a number of benefits – they offer shade from our intense summer sun, reduce the ambient air temperature through transpiration, slow water run-off, can reduce wind strength, filter ground water, provide fruit, and screen views, as well as offering beauty and seasonal interest. But they can also be a safety hazard, an eyesore and in constant need of maintenance if the wrong tree is planted in the wrong place.

The Right Tree, Right Place concept was initially established to address conflicts between trees and

overhead electrical lines. Electrical utilities and the tree care industry have established recommended tree heights near lines.

It can be heartbreaking when one has nurtured a tree for years, only to have its' beauty destroyed by utility line crews pruning for safety, not aesthetics. They routinely top trees or cut holes in tree canopies and homeowners have no legal control over their work. That is why it is so important to look up before you decide where to plant.



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Proximity to structures, sidewalks, drives and fence lines also need to be considered. The distance a tree needs to be from a building depends on its ultimate size. One guideline is that a tree that matures up to 75 feet should be 15 feet from a house, and trees 30 feet or less should be 8 to 10 feet away. If a tree will be planted between a structure and a paved area, remember there will need to be enough permeable area (soil, gravel or stone not set in concrete) around the tree's base for water to reach the roots. This should be equal to about 25 square feet. Trees should be planted at least one foot from fences so that the trunk does not grow into the fence itself; any 'volunteer' trees along a fence should be cut to the ground as soon as they are discovered.

The next issue to consider is access to water. A newly planted tree needs regular deep watering, whether with a slow-running hose that soaks the ground, a bubbler-type irrigation head or a tree watering bag that can easily be filled. All trees need to be watered for at least the first year after planting, and most benefit from two years of supplemental watering. Even trees that are considered drought resistant must be watered until their root systems are established, which can take several years.



Power line problems



Consider how a tree will look full grown

Once these logistical requirements are met, it is time to think about the conditions in your own yard – what type of soil you have, whether you get high winds, if drought-tolerance is critical, how much space you have – and how much time you want to devote to tree care. CSU Extension has several excellent publications available online (<https://extension.colostate.edu>) which provide information on the best deciduous, evergreen and native trees for our area. There is also a Front Range Tree Recommendation List, which rates trees from Generally Recommended (A) to Not Recommended (D). Important to note are the specific tree varieties referenced on these lists. Trees sold at mass merchandisers may have been purchased because of their availability and price, rather than suitability to our growing conditions. Be sure to check the scientific names on tree tags, to make certain the tree you buy will

grow well here. There are lots of beautiful, young trees for sale this time of year, and it can be tempting to buy on impulse. Be an informed buyer instead, and seek out local nurseries and plant sales organized by Master Gardeners and other gardening organizations as sources for trees particularly adapted to our region.

Once you know which trees will grow well here, consider what you are trying to accomplish by adding a tree to your yard. This will help you decide how large you want the tree to get, whether it is deciduous or evergreen, what shape it should be, if you want to attract birds and pollinators, and whether it is to be a unique landscape feature or be part of a background planting.

Obviously, you'll want a tall tree for shade, and selecting a deciduous tree with open branching would provide winter sunlight. Some of these trees also have spring blooms and/or colorful fall foliage. Evergreen trees can reduce wind speed, screen an undesirable view, help to 'anchor' a house in the yard or define a property line. Just be sure to consider how the tree will look when it is mature or you may not get the result you expected.

If you will be planting a tree that can be seen from rooms that are frequently used, a deciduous tree that blooms in the spring, leafs out over summer, changes color in the fall, and is outlined with snow in the winter will provide year-round pleasure. If your goal instead is to create a focal point at your front entry, a blooming tree or one with an interesting branching pattern would be a good choice.

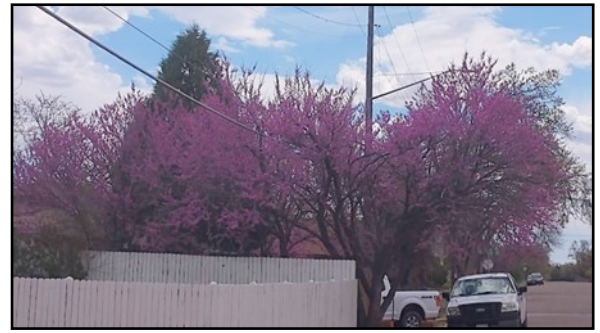
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Available in paper and electronic formats.



If a tree is going to be the center of attention in your yard, you may want to invest in a larger tree with an established branching habit, especially if you are not an experienced, competent and patient pruner.

Choosing trees that will act as a backdrop gives you more flexibility. Mixing different tree species and varying their spacing and ultimate heights can evoke a shaded woodland. This would also allow you to add trees as your budget and time permits. Using the same variety of tree, even if they are different sizes, creates a strong massing effect, especially along a property line.






A mass of red bud trees

When planning where to plant, think of trees as living sculptures - some narrow and upright, others with gracefully arching branches, and still others with full, lollipop heads. More vertical trees can be planted in informal groups, or lined up like sentries in a row. They will grow more successfully even where space is limited. A tree with a spreading or rounded canopy needs room to literally branch out – otherwise you will have to remove major branches over the years, which will change the natural shape of the tree and make it more vulnerable to insects and disease.

The trees that were planted before us, and those we plant for future generations, are gifts. They are also investments, requiring care and water to survive. If we chose the Right Tree, and plant it in the Right Place, it will provide us, and all who travel by it, years of beauty, function and pleasure. 🌱

All Pueblo GROWS Seed Lending Library

Join us the last Saturday of every month for a free educational seminar and to help prepare seed for the library. The fun starts at 9:30 a.m. in the Thurston room on the first floor of the Rawlings Library. All seed donations welcome!





DIGGING DEEPER

ARBOR DAY, A GREEN CELEBRATION

By Marcia Weaver, Colorado Master Gardener 2005, Native Plant Master, 2007

As a child in Nebraska attending grade school, Arbor Day was a day to go to the park and help plant trees, have a picnic and turn in our collected coins for trees to make a forest that became Halsey National Forest. This forest that started as a result of Arbor Day in 1904, was planted on 20,000 acres in the Nebraska Sandhill's prairie, the largest undisturbed area of prairie in the United States.


Many people entering the Nebraska Territory to make their homes were dismayed by the lack of trees. In 1854, Julius Sterling Morton and his wife moved from Detroit to Nebraska City and established a home with many trees shrubs and flowers. Morton soon became the editor of the "Nebraska News" and as a journalist and editor he used that forum to spread agricultural information and his enthusiasm for the value of trees.

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Morton's involvement in politics led to his becoming secretary of the Nebraska Territory, and provided another opportunity to stress the value of trees. On January 4, 1872, Morton first proposed a tree-planting holiday to be called "Arbor Day" at a meeting of the State Board of Agriculture. The date was set for April 10, 1872. Morton stated, "[Arbor Day] ... is not like other holidays. Each of those reposes on the past, while Arbor Day proposes for the future." Prizes were offered to counties and individuals for planting properly the largest number of trees on that day. It was estimated that more than one million trees were planted in Nebraska on the first Arbor Day. The official date for celebrating Arbor Day was later moved to April 22, Morton's birthday, and then to the last Friday in April. All 50 states recognize Arbor Day and celebrate it at the optimal time for planting trees in their particular state, ranging from January through May. Colorado's Arbor Day is April 20th but celebrated on the third Friday of April.

For the 39th year, the Arbor Day Foundation has recognized Pueblo as a 2018 Tree City USA member. Pueblo is one of 3,400 municipalities to receive this honor for its commitment to effective urban forest management, according to a news release sent by Arbor Day Foundation officials. The Arbor Day Foundation stated, "Trees provide multiple benefits to communities when they are properly planted and maintained, including helping in improving the visual appeal of a neighborhood, increasing property values, reducing home cooling costs, removing air pollutants and providing wildlife habitat, among other listed benefits."

To quote Julius Sterling Morton, "Each generation takes the earth as trustees. We ought to bequeath to posterity as many forests and orchards as we have exhausted and consumed." Thru studies he has been proven right that trees have innumerable benefits for the world and he states, "... how much more enduring are the animate trees of our planting. They grow and self-perpetuate themselves and shed yearly blessings on our race." 



Arbor Day Foundation logo

**Colorado Master Gardener and
Supporters of Horticultural
Education (SHED)
Plant Sale**

**Saturday, May 11, 2019
8 a.m.—2 p.m.**

**Fine Arts Building
Colorado State Fairgrounds**



**Cash and
Credit Cards
Accepted!**

**Come and shop for plants
from many vendors (including
wholesale) all at one location!
Master Gardeners will be on
hand to give expert advice!**

**Come early for the best
selection. Enter through the
Beulah Avenue gate.**

- Native Plants
- Hard to find plants
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- Hanging baskets
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- Vegetables
- Annuals & Perennials
- Drought tolerant plants
- And much more!










**PUEBLO COUNTY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

2019

Xeriscape Tours

OF PUEBLO & PUEBLO WEST



You are free to visit any and all of the gardens at your leisure and in any order you wish on the date for that community.

Xeriscape Tour Maps will be available in May at:

- Most Pueblo Nursery & Garden Centers
- Pueblo Libraries
- Online at: www.secwcd.com
pueblo.colostate.edu and
www.westernlandscape.org



Colorado Master Gardeners and Pueblo West Community Xeriscape Gardeners will be present to answer questions.


Garden biographies and plant lists will be available at each garden location.

Take a FREE self-guided tour of neighborhood Xeric gardens.


**Pueblo Locations -
Saturday, June 1, 2019 only
9 a.m. until 3 p.m.**

**Pueblo West Locations -
Sunday, June 2, 2019 only
9 a.m. until 3 p.m.**



**PUEBLO COUNTY
MASTER GARDENER
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**



For more info, contact
CSU Extension-Pueblo
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FABULOUS FAMILIES

THE WILLOWS OF FAMILY *SALICACEAE*

By Marge Vorndam, Colorado Master Gardener 1997, Native Plant Master, 2007

“The coolness of the riverbank, and the whispering of the reeds
Daybreak is not so very far away ...
It’s the wind in the willows and the piper at the gates of dawn”
Van Morrison, 1997

The *Salicaceae* Family represents a special icon in poetry and song. Deriving from Latin, the term “*Salicaceae*” refers to “near water”, which hints at the Willow Family’s preferred habitat within that beautiful setting. Willows of Genus *Salix* and poplars, aspen, cottonwoods (Genus *Populus*), compose the members of this Family. Here, we will explore the *Salix*.

All willows share the same Genus name, *Salix*. There are approximately 300 species of willows inhabiting Europe, Asia and parts of North America. When present, the flower type, a “catkin”, is a distinctive identification marker. The staminate (male) and pistillate (female) flowers, lacking petals, are found dioeciously (on separate plants). Catkins appear as cylindrical 1 to 3-inch-long structures (see photo). Pussy willow flowers are an example, appearing as a harbinger of spring before the leaves erupt. Pistillate plants bear the small brown encapsulated seeds on their catkins later in the year. Willows are cross-fertile and hybridization between species occurs readily in nature. *Salix* appear most commonly as small trees or shrubs having simple elongated oval or round shaped alternate leaves with serrate margins.



Willow catkins. Photo by Paul Vorndam

Willows have an interwoven history with humans. Prehistorically, they were used for fuel, in basket making, mud-daub building construction, fencing, fish traps, arrow shafts and other fiber applications. The bark contains salicin and has been used medicinally for inflammation, fever, and pain treatment. Aspirin, acetylsalicylic acid, was originally derived from salicin. Willow bark tea can also be used as a natural rooting medium for woody plant cuttings.

Today, willows are applied to ecological reclamation and restoration projects due to their ability to readily root and grow. Willows show promise as a prime agent of carbon sequestration in the fight against climate change because of their rapid growth rate. They may also have a role in soil pollution remediation efforts, as they selectively remove heavy metals and clean petroleum spills from contaminated areas.

Due to partiality to moist and wet locations, willows present high wildlife and habitat values. They provide cover and browse for deer, elk and moose, are used by beaver for dam and lodge construction, and cool stream water through shading. They are valuable to several species of butterflies, for bird habitat, and feed native bees who frequent the catkins for pollen and nectar. The extensive rooting system of streambank willows stabilizes soils and prevents erosion.

Willows are adaptable to landscaping and are worth considering for horticultural applications. Consider the popularity of the graceful Weeping Willow, or the majesty of a Globe Willow. The twigs of willow shrubs and trees are colored in hues of yellows, reds and oranges, attractive against the backdrop of winter snows, and the early spring catkins of pussy willows provide fuzz for hummingbird nests. However, due to their ability to grow extensive root systems and sucker readily, willow placement should not be near structures, septic systems or underground utility lines. Planting the specimen in a large pot is a way to limit that tendency. Willows do require near- to full- sunlight, and water requirements can vary from light to high. Willows are not xeric. Before selecting a willow species for growing, check the plant hardiness zone, particularly at the low end, as temperature sensitivity varies widely. Willows tend to be short-lived, with trees surviving around 50 years before decline. Willows are susceptible to aphid infestations and canker development.

Most willow species that are used horticulturally are introduced or hybridized in our area. Few that are recommended for Front Range applications are native. Due to their invasive habit, two *Salix* species, *S. alba* var. *vitellina* and *S. fragilis* should not be planted close to waterways, as they displace other native species due to their aggressive growth habit.

Trees range to 35 feet tall. Those recommended by the Colorado Nursery & Greenhouse Association for Front Range use are *S. alba* – White Willow, *S. amygdaloides* – Peachleaf willow – native, *S. matsudaria* – Globe willow (cold hardy), and *Salix x* ‘Prairie Cascade’.

Shrubs range from 4 to 10 feet tall with a variable spread to 10 feet wide, depending on the plant. *Salix* shrubs recommended by Heidrich’s Colorado Tree Farm Nursery in Colorado Springs are *S. arenaria* – Blue Creek Willow, *S. irrorata* – Blue Stem Willow – native, *S. exigua* – narrow leaved willow - native, *S. purpurea* – Dwarf Artic Willow, and *S. caprea* – French Pussy Willow.

Willows present a unique challenge when using plant keys for identification, according to Weber and Wittman (2001). Many parts of the plant are ephemeral, present only for short periods of time during the year. But this creates an intriguing challenge, and one that can be satisfying in its pursuit. Happy sleuthing and enjoy our willows, Desdemona notwithstanding! 🕵️



Globe Willow, *S. matsudaria*

Garden Tip: Tree planting steps

- Step 1: Determine depth of planting hole. The root ball should be above grade and not covered with backfill soil.
- Step 2: Dig a saucer shaped hole three times the root ball diameter.
- Step 3: Set tree in place, and remove container and any wrapping.
- Step 5: Backfill, but do not cover the top of the root ball.
- Step 7: Water to settle soil.
- Step 8: Mulch the backfill area, but not the top of the root ball.



For more detailed tree planting steps, visit: <http://cmg.colostate.edu/Gardennotes/633.pdf>

What’s the Right Tree for My Place?

By Patricia O’Brien, Colorado Master Gardener, 2018

During my master gardening training in 2018, I heard this expression so many times, it became a mantra that motivated me to constantly inspect trees to discern whether they were the “wrong trees in the wrong places” that didn’t guarantee at least the average 8-12 years of pleasure that we can expect from a tree. Then, during one of those odd winter wind storms in Pueblo, the beautiful elm in my front yard toppled blocking traffic all night. I hoped I could save it from the residual base but the tree had split down the middle and had to be removed. Of course, I was grateful that it crashed into the street rather than against my house, but I wondered what went wrong? It was the wrong tree for my small front yard and had probably been planted too deep.

So, what should you consider when planting a tree in your front yard (or elsewhere)? The first thing to realize is that planting a tree is a long-term investment, and that unlike a perennial plant, once a tree is established, it’s not easy to move it. It’s important to consider the shape, its potential size, and how it can fit in the immediate environment.

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What is the quality of the tree, that is, its genetics? How drought tolerant is the tree you'd like in our mostly dry temperature zone? Is it disease and pest-resistant?

The 2017 Western Landscape Symposium produced a list of the "top ten trees for Pueblo." Those that were also recommended by the City of Pueblo urban forestry staff include :*Aesculus* (horse chestnut, Ohio buckeye, Red buckeye), *Gymnocladus* (Kentucky coffee tree), *Malus* (crabapple), *Pinus* (Austrian, Ponderosa, Pinyon), *Pyrus* (Chanticleer, Redspire), *Tilia* (American, Green spire).



Horse chestnut tree

Once a species seems like a fit for your landscape, seek expert help for correct planting. It must be "just right" for its site needs and limitations including how it is planted for best sustainability, even through those odd winter wind storms. See CMG Garden Notes #633 for a good overview of the science of planting trees (<http://cmg.colostate.edu/Gardennotes/633.pdf>) Happy gardening and may you find a good tree to shade you! 🌿

Garden Tip: Dandelions



The best way to prevent dandelions in your lawn is to maintain a thick, healthy turf. This helps to keep seeds from taking root. If dandelions appear, pluck the yellow flower off before it goes to seed and spreads.



INTERESTING INSECTS

THE LILAC/ASH BORER (*PODOSESIA SYRINGAE*)

By Orla O'Callaghan, Colorado Master Gardener, 2005, Native Plant Master, 2009

The Lilac/Ash Borer, also called the Ash/Lilac Borer, is a native insect, common in Colorado. They feed on most species of ash trees, especially the Green and White Ash trees, and lilac and privet shrubs.

Adult Lilac/Ash Borers are a winged insect similar in size and appearance to paper wasps. They have brown and black stripes. Adults emerge from their host tree or shrub, when the right conditions occur, namely warm sunny days with temperatures above 60° F. In Colorado, the adult Lilac/Ash Borer usually emerges in early to mid-April. Most people don't see the adults emerge, but you can sometimes see the pupal skin they leave behind. This skin can stick to the emergence hole for a short while, until it shrivels and falls off. Adult Lilac/Ash Borers are short-lived, living only around 4-6 weeks.




Lilac/Ash borer

After mating, the female Lilac/Ash Borer, flies to a host tree or shrub, and lays eggs in cracks, crevices or holes in the bark of the lower portion of the trunk or larger branches (usually the lower 12'). Trees stressed from poor placement, or poor watering practices are more often chosen by the female. The eggs can be laid singly or in small groups. In 9-13 days, the eggs hatch into white grub-like larvae. The white larvae have dark heads and five pairs of reduced prolegs (fleshy leg-like projections) on their abdomen. The prolegs have hooks on their ends. These hooks help people distinguish the clearwing borers, including the Lilac/Ash Borer, from other white larvae of beetles that also bore into Ash trees. For more information, see Garden Insects of North America, by Whitney Cranshaw.

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The larvae bore into the trunk or shrub's branches and make a chamber just under the bark. There they feed on the cambium (a thin layer of cells that divide and cause the plant to thicken) and phloem (the tissue that conducts food for the plant). Later they bore upwards in the trunk. The larvae overwinter in the trunk. When the larva is full grown, which occurs in late winter, it moves back to the cambium, and bores a chamber just under the bark. There it forms a paper-thin pupal covering over itself, and develops into the adult winged form.

The damage the Lilac/Ash Borer causes in its host tree or shrub varies in severity. The larvae's boring damage under the bark is rough gouges to a depth of two inches. Gnarled swelling can form in places where more than one larvae has bored. Increased suckering can occur in damaged trees and shrubs. In shrubs, the insect can damage the cambium enough to cause girdling which can kill the stems or branches, especially above the girdling. In lilacs, the adults often lay eggs on the older stems and branches. (Note: To properly maintain lilacs, you should remove all dead branches whenever they occur, and one-third of the oldest stems each year after the flowers are gone. This may help in limiting the presence of the Lilac/Ash Borer.) Other methods to help your ash trees, lilac or privet shrubs, are to reduce the stress on the plant by planting it in the right place, properly maintaining it, and utilizing proper watering practices. There are chemical insecticidal controls and lure traps for the Lilac/Ash Borer. For more information on these, or about this interesting insect, see Extension Fact Sheet 5.614. 



Pupal skin



PERENNIAL PEOPLE

ROB PROCTOR'S SURPRISING XERISCAPE GARDEN

By Maureen Van Ness, Colorado Master Gardener, 2015

Rob Proctor, the keynote speaker at the recent Western Landscape Symposium had us all laughing, and at least once, gasping in amazement. When he showed us the first garden photo: an exuberant display of bushy, vibrant blooms, an aisle of immaculately trimmed green grass, and many, many, lush containers around patio seating, I think we were all surprised this was a Colorado garden. The English garden influence is apparent, and understandable as he personally knew and was friends with several of the great English women gardeners.

As I reviewed his talk, I found all the xeriscape garden principles. Even though his garden does not have the typical xeric look – plant, stretch of gravel, plant, gravel. His front garden is the more usual xeric because he didn't want to be out there mowing and fussing, and where, "You might meet people." (We can all relate, right?) Even his specifically xeric garden has an abundance of blooms. Rob has written several books about xeriscape, or water wise gardening, and it is evident, although his interpretation is quite different than most of our gardens.

Rob is also an artist, a botanical illustrator. He says, "If you garden, you are an artist."

The photos of his garden through the seasons showed us a wide variety of plants to grow. He says, whether we have shade or sun, a large or small space, whatever the circumstances, there is always an opportunity to grow plants if we look for it. Even in containers. He has hundreds of containers and says you can grow anything if the container is large enough, you understand that plant's needs and preferences, and provide excellent soil.



Rob's garden



The flamboyance of his garden may have disguised his xeriscape practices:

DESIGN AND PLAN CAREFULLY: Efficient use of space and water is shown in his closely grouped plants, grouped for watering and similar conditions. He waters by hand (no irrigation system or sprinklers) with a wand on the hose. The close grouping of plants simplifies weeding, also done by hand. Knowledge of micro-climates and his experience, which he calls, “Trial and erroring,” enables him to grow the extensive variety of plants. Shade or sun, he knows what the plants prefer.

SOIL: He emphasized that quality of soil is vital to the plants’ health. He buys the best he can find and avoids any that contain bark chips. He supplements with a high quality compost he works in around the plants.

LIMIT TURF TO A PRACTICAL SIZE: His lawn area is a walkway to enjoy and view the flowers. Out front, he eliminated the lawn and replaced it with easy care, long blooming, and colorful meadow sage, feverfew, onosma and penstemon. His basic bloom philosophy is, “cram them in.” Forget proper spacing and plant densely for greatest impact. Also, limit plants to what will do well in your habitat.

WATER EFFICIENTLY, WATER BY ZONES, LOW, MODERATE: No begonias next to the meadow sage. He mentioned using a moisture meter or a high tech finger test and only water when necessary (when soil is dry a couple of inches down). Though his borders look lush and fresh, he chooses plants that survive with sparse watering.

MULCH: For this, he uses an uncommon technique of closely spaced planting. This density creates its own mulch as the plants shoulder up to each other for shade and protection. He does not favor bark mulch or weed creating straw, and instead, relies on his own plants to conserve water, maintain soil moisture and reduce weed growth.

APPROPRIATE PLANTS: Here, the biodiversity of his garden is rich and abundant. Bees and birds flourish in this environment of greenery and seasonal flowers. He plans for blooms from early spring to late fall, defining the seasons by what is currently blooming, both in his multitude of containers and in-ground borders. Though the style may be English, his plant list includes many of our familiar plants, but closer together and more of them. His long gravel driveway is filled with overflowing containers and pleasant seating areas. What was a long, unused space became a lush relief of greenery and color. Finding unused spaces and corners and filling them with appropriate plants is one of his themes. He also pays attention to how foliage color complements bloom colors through the seasons.

MAINTENANCE: He never sprays, but weeds by hand. He waters only when necessary and uses the time to enjoy music on his headphones. His garden brings him pleasure. It’s not about a to-do list of chores. It is a place to flourish.



He shares the exuberant beauty at the end of August each year by hosting an open tour. For ten dollars, you can walk the grassy paths, enjoy his successful, beautiful garden, and support the Dumb Friends League - a local animal shelter.

The diversity and density of his plants provide long seasons of bloom and a garden packed to the brim with abundance and inspiration for what we can grow within the context of xeriscape principles. His garden is, perhaps, a way to expand our view of xeriscape and not be limited by the preconceived notion of what it “should” look like.



Mindful Landscaping

By Penelope Hyland, Colorado Master Gardener, 2018

My favorite time of year is early spring. Every morning, I take a cup of coffee and wander the yard looking at the emerging buds and leaves. I notice the growth from one day to the next as I look forward to the new blossoms. I note all of this in my garden journal along with weather information and anything I do in my yard and garden that day. As I walk, I also take note of what needs to be done, the current state of the plants and what I would like to do in the future.

Mindfulness is simply paying attention to the present moment with non-judgmental acceptance. Applying this concept to gardening and landscaping is a way of paying attention to the plants in your yard that benefits both it and yourself. A beneficial habit is to walk your garden and yard on a regular basis to notice all the details while also enjoying yourself.

With the recent storms and new growth emerging, this is an ideal time to start mindfully walking your yard and garden. Notice any damage left from winter and the storms: broken limbs, twigs cluttering the ground, bent stalks. There might be some winter kill or emerging buds that didn't survive the latest freeze. Without all the foliage, it is easier to see where trees and shrubs need dead wood taken out or other pruning. There might be an accumulation of leaves from fall that need to be gathered and composted. You can take note of what plants are healthy and thriving and which plants need some attention. By keeping a garden journal, you will have information on how you fertilized and/or added amendments to your soil. Then you can determine what steps need to be taken for the plants that need some additional attention. You can also take note of the amount of sunshine in different areas of your yard – perhaps some plants need to be transplanted to a sunnier or shadier location. You also want to notice any insect damage or activity that needs to be addressed. It is helpful to look under leaves and at the base of plants as well as trunks and stems.

With all of this information, you can decide what needs to be done first in the area of winter clean-up and then preparation for the current year. As you go from season to season and year to year, it is easier to develop plans for the future.

As you continue to practice walking your yard in a mindful fashion, you will begin to develop an overall sense of how your plants are maturing in their growth through the season. You will also notice how your plants respond as the weather changes. As it gets hotter, some plants might need more shade or more frequent watering.

Walking mindfully through your yard and garden allows you to develop both an individual perspective of your plants but also an overall view of your garden. Perhaps your garden needs more shade and could benefit from planting a tree; maybe you are thinking of adding some vines with a trellis for support; would you like to intersperse flowers with vegetables; or, would you like to add a water feature? Becoming more aware of the health of your plants and the layout of your landscaping along with your own desires helps to create future garden goals. Think of what gives you the most pleasure when you are outside in your garden. Is it the sight of flowers, the sound of the birds, the pleasure of herbs and vegetables waiting to be picked, the shade of a beautiful tree or the sound of water? Maybe you would like to add a small sitting area to enjoy the fruits of your labor. Every day allows you to check on the health of all your plants in your yard and garden; to enjoy the beauty and dream of the future. 🌱



Spring garden



Check out all of the CSU Extension-Pueblo County Facebook pages!

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