

Home & Garden Television

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25 Biggest Landscaping Mistakes

Bad landscaping makes for bad neighbors! We dig up the worst so you can learn what not to do and find out how to make bad yards beautiful.

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Stick with one accent piece for your garden, even if it is a little silly. One little whimsical statement goes a lot further than 10. [Get one like this now.](#)

create a compost pile. Compost containers have gotten more attractive. Some almost disappear into the landscape.

23. Planting in the Wrong Place

Improper plant placement is another common mistake. People often do not take into consideration the proper sunlight and exposure for their plants. Be sure to pay attention to the little tag that you get when you buy the plant. When it comes to planting trees, you need to remember how big they could get and how much space they are going to need. Also think about focal points — choose something that's going to look good year-round.

HGTV has brought together some of the best gardening experts to share their insider tips on how to avoid common landscaping disasters and what to do to fix them if it does happen.

25. Excessive Lawn Ornamentation

People often make the mistake of putting too many decorative items in their front yard, which can be a distraction from the beauty of the natural landscape. Before setting out that lawn ornament, ask yourself why are you putting it there and how it fits in to the context of your overall design and plant materials. Stick with one crisp choice, even if it is a little silly. One little whimsical statement goes a lot further than 10.

24. Forgetting to Recycle

Yard projects tend to produce a good amount of waste, which most people don't realize when they set out to do the work.

Instead of tossing out the branches, clippings and other debris, dispose of them in an eco-friendly way. Rent a shredder and turn them into mulch, and put lawn clippings back on the lawn — they are both great fertilizers. Another idea is to

22. Planting Too Deeply

One of the quickest ways to kill a tree is to plant it too deeply. Some folks figure the more soil they can put around it, the better. But doing so can actually choke the tree to death because there is no air allowed to go to the root system. Going too deep can also encourage root rot. Avoid these scenarios by looking at the main stem, where the largest branch is and then where all of the tentacles come out. That's the root ball, and that's what you want to meet, right along the surface. A good rule of thumb with plants is to dig to the actual height of the container in which it came.

21. Cutting Grass Too Short

It's a common myth that cutting the grass shorter means you have to mow it less. That's actually not the case, and you can do more harm than good. If you scalp the lawn, it could result in a bare patch, which could make it too inviting for insects and/or susceptible to disease. The key is to cut the lawn different lengths throughout the year. During the summer, the lawn needs a little more shade, so let the blades grow just a little bit more. That way the water doesn't evaporate so quickly. During the winter, cut it a little bit shorter so that the sunlight can actually get into the soil.

20. Forgetting the View From Your Window

It may seem like common sense to think about the view from inside the house, but a lot of people forget it. Keep in mind what it looks like from all angles. Place your containers where you want them, and then go inside and look through every major window to see what they'll look like before you plant. It should be like a painting. When you look out, you should see the glass framed with beautiful trees and foliage.

19. Using the Wrong-Size Pots

It is best to start a plant in a larger pot than it comes in to allow it to room to grow. However, if you put a plant in a pot that is too large, it can shift, sink down into the soil, get too much water or dry out too fast. Also, remember that you are going to have to re-pot it, eventually. It's easy to tell when that's necessary because little roots begin to stick out at the bottom. A word of caution related to re-potting. Be sure to give a plant plenty of time get acclimated to its new pot before re-potting again.

18. Failing to Fertilize Properly

There are two ways that fertilizing can be a mistake. The first one is not doing it at all. The other is fertilizing too much or fertilizing improperly. Ask someone at your garden center to recommend a proper fertilizer for your yard. It's a good idea to do it at least twice a year, once in the spring and again in the fall. You should never do so in the bright sun, and watering always needs to follow. It's also a good idea to mix in fertilizer when planting new plants. Make sure that, when I dig the hole, I mix in new soil and I also mix in fertilizer. So the plant, over the period of a year, is going to have a nice time release of fertilizer.

17. Picking the Wrong Plants

Just because a plant looks pretty doesn't mean it actually belongs in your yard. You have to take into consideration your particular backyard, with filtered light or shade, and what's going to work best for you. If it's a really hot, sunny spot, maybe you want to go with a succulent. Get a great landscaping book for your area to help you figure out what

to plant and when, as well as how and when to fertilize.

16. Not Accounting for Wildlife

Before you decide what to plant in your garden, think about what pests you have in relation to what you'd like to plant. For example, pretty flowering plants can attract deer, so you might want to throw in some bitter-tasting ones among them. Once they taste the wrong one, they are likely to stop coming around. If there are wild rabbits around, you may need to shelter your garden bed by building a small fence. Chicken wire is another option.

15. Being Shortsighted

Being shortsighted is a common problem because many people don't know what the eventual growth of their plants will be. You need to find out how they spread, how they reproduce and what type of maintenance they require. There are actually software programs available where you can design a landscape and then click a button, and it will show you the growth rate of those plants over a year or two years and so on.

14. Improper Pruning

Pruning can be just as much of an art form as it is a technique, but when pruning is improperly done, you can do more harm than good. In fact, in some cases, it's better not to prune at all than to do it improperly. Every plant has a different pruning process. The fall is usually the best time of year to prune, but be sure to find out for sure. There are great books and manuals as well as websites that offer tips and explain proper pruning techniques.

13. Scattered Color

Before making a trip to the nursery, you need to know what palette you'd like as well as is which colors work well together. Look at the color of your house and then choose one color that really frames it. Try to stay semi-monochromatic for the most part because if there is too much color and it's too strong, it almost can become a distraction. Repetition and some harmony in a garden goes a long way.

12. Irrational Irrigation

Use the correct amount of water for your plants and lawn. A lot of homeowners make the mistake of over-watering. Most lawns just need about an inch of a water per week. The best time of day to water the lawn (and usually any plant) is early morning so that way it has all day to dry. You can buy a sprinkler with an automatic timer to reduce water waste, or even put in an irrigation system in.

11. Using the Wrong Tools

Having the right tool ensures your safety, maximizes your time and is more efficient in the long run. Think about the size of the job and dictate the size of the tool, accordingly. Some must-haves are safety goggles, gloves, a solid shovel and a good rake. Keep them organized, and keep them clean. For specialty jobs, you might want to consider renting a tool, and not just power equipment, but hand tools. Maybe you don't need that tool for the rest of your life, but you need it for that one specific job.



Good landscaping is made possible by

10. Failing To Be Family-Friendly

A lot of people get carried away with the theme of their yard. They don't think about how they are going to use the lawn or the area — they just think about how they want it to look. For example, a rock garden is really attractive, but probably not the best thing for a family with small children. Sit down and make a list of what you want to do in your yard, making sure to look at the needs of everyone in the household.

good tools and a lot of sweat equity. But you don't have to break your back (or hands in this case) to do it. There are a wide variety of [ergonomic gardening tools](#) available on the market today.

9. Impulse Buying

Do a little research before you reach and grab. Have some sort of a shopping list in mind and then get what you want and leave. It's very hard to return flowers, so this step is imperative.

8. Too Much of the Same Thing

Intermingle various shapes and sizes to give you interest in your yard as well as bringing the right kind of insects. Certain plants need certain nutrients, and if you plant all the same plant, then it's sucking all of the nutrients out of the soil.

7. Overlooking Maintenance

Part of planning a garden is also planning time to maintain it. Make up a maintenance schedule and abide by it. Garden beds need to be weeded at least once or twice a month, minimum. If you don't have the time to take care of your garden, make sure you have enough money to pay somebody to do it.

6. Ignoring the Seasons

Plan out your garden with regard to the seasons. When homeowners go to a nursery or plant yard, they often just buy what's in season at the time. Various flowers bloom at certain times of the year. If you've got a lot of plants that are blooming in the spring, remember that in the fall you're going to need some other plants, if you want foliage. Select plants look good in the winter and in the spring, if possible.

5. Underestimating the Cost

There is a lot of sticker shock in the world of plants. People often think "it's just a couple of plants, how expensive could it be?" Landscaping is actually 30 percent more expensive than any other type of home improvement project. Another area that gets underestimated is the budget, and one of the biggest factors in a budget is the labor involved. It always costs more, and people cost the most. When you're starting a landscape project, make sure you have enough budget, because you want to do the job one time, and you want to do it right.

4. Overlooking Exterior Lighting

The biggest mistake people make when they think about planning out their yard is that they only visualize it during the day. Just adding some exterior lighting not only helps with vision and movement, but it also really makes the garden pop. It doesn't have to be expensive or entail a lot of effort. For instance, there are a lot of good solar lights that can easily be stuck in the ground. The sun heats them up all day and then at night they come on with a nice soft

glow.

3. Neglecting Curb Appeal

Never underestimate the power of curb appeal. A lot of homeowners put all of their energy into the backyard, but the front of the house is where first impressions are made. There are three simple improvements you can make that make a big difference out front. Paint your door a contrasting color than what is at the base of your home, keep the grass trim and green and plant colorful flowers.

2. Mismatched Style

When selecting plants, you should match the architecture of your home with the theme of your garden. Besides the plants in your garden, you need to think about your hardscape. If you are putting in a deck, for example, you need to make sure those elements of your garden also reflect positively upon your house.

1. Not Having a Plan

Don't start a landscaping project without a plan. Decide on a specific theme or look and then draw it out on paper. Figure out where you want to put your plants and shrubs in relation to the shape and style of your house. Examine ways to bring the inside out so that when you are finished, you have a nice, harmonious design. Don't forget to factor in your budget, and when you hit the nursery, stick to it. If you follow the plan, you (and your landscape) will reap the rewards. Also in this Episode

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- 25 Biggest Landscaping Mistakes