

Confessions of a Lazy Gardener

Issue #10: The Lazy Gardener and Landscape Design Mistakes

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I took a look at the gardening section on the www.about.com website* the other day. This site has proved to be an excellent way to point out my deficiencies. For instance, I ran across a list of the Top 10 Mistakes to Avoid in Home Landscape Design. The compiler of this list, David Beaulieu, is clearly way more into landscaping than I ever will be, and he has some very good points. Here is his list, with a running commentary from your Lazy Gardener:

- 1. Piecemeal Planting: Failure to Have a Plan.** Boy, do I know this one! Even after 20 years** on Dart Avenue, I still occasionally succumb to the temptation of a fancy new cultivar that I have no idea where to put. So my borders always look like a jumble.
- 2. Having a Lawn Just Because "Everyone Else Does It".** OK, I can blame my husband Phil for this one. I could live without the lawn (and associated clover, dandelions, plantains and creeping charlie), but Phil believes that we should have a lawn. So we do. And he mows it.
- 3. Insufficient Fall Color in Your Home Landscape Design.** This is actually one that I don't feel too bad about. Between the late-blooming grasses, Joe-Pye Weed, heleniums, sedums, asters and mums, we do OK.
- 4. Lack of Winter Interest in your Home Landscape Design.** I believe my gardens not only lack winter interest -- winter interest is actually in the negative numbers. Soil mix from my various is piled in the garden or in a wheelbarrow that stands outside all winter; Containers are either stacked on the patio or piled in the porch; Tender roses are surrounded by bags of leaves that look like bodies buried in the back yard; More bags of leaves are stacked on the patio; and my old resin Adirondack chairs - that desperately need a paint job -- dot the landscape. It is depressing. Especially when we don't have consistent snow cover to hide everything.
- 5. Failure to Irrigate.** Mr. Beaulieu advocates installing a sprinkling system. While having a watering system would allow me to be even lazier than I am about watering, I have yet to take the initiative necessary to get one installed.
- 6. Planting on a Hillside Prone to Erosion.** Being a landscaping kind of guy, Mr. Beaulieu advocates installing retaining walls to manage erosion instead of trying to control it with plant cover. I can plead innocent to this one only because the only hillside we have is planted to grass (see Item #2 above).
- 7. Failure to Work with What You Have.** This is something that we all have to learn the hard way, I think. I'm lucky to have light, well-drained soil. But I am resigned to not being able to keep some of those bog plants alive. And I need to keep find a way to better "go with the flow" in the gardens in our local park,

where competition from neighboring trees and the occasional incursions by park visitors can affect plantings.

- 8. Failure to Incorporate Deer-Resistant Plants in Your Home Landscape Design.** I've only had a deer wander through my gardens three times in 20 years**, so this isn't a huge problem, at least yet. If we get more deer, they'd have a field day, I'm sure. It's a good thing we have people in the club who know much more about gardening with deer than I do!
- 9. Not Getting Anything Done in the Yard Because Tools are Never Handy.** Mr. Beaulieu included this because he has published a guide for selecting a tool shed. My solution to this problem (and it is a problem at my place) is to leave my tools lying all over the place until the fall.
- 10. Forgetting Functionality in Home Landscape Design.** Aesthetics aren't everything. I discovered that when I realized that if I planted a shrub in a certain location, I would effectively block the path of the lawnmower and would have to carry the mower from one patch of lawn to another in order to cut the grass. Even though this would have been Phil's problem since he mows the lawn, I decided to be just a little more practical and plant the shrub somewhere else.

I'm glad Mr. Beaulieu stopped at Ten Mistakes! This is depressing!

* I don't believe about.com exists, but a quick Google search found Mr. Beaulieu on www.thespruce.com with more recent advice.

** 35 years now!