



Nature Scapes
INC.

Cultivated News

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Winter Landscaping Tips for Homeowners

In winter most of us don't plan on working in our yards and gardens. Yet this season provides an opportunity to prevent certain maintenance problems that might overwhelm us later. Together, the cold weather and resulting dormancy create a set of perfect conditions for pruning shrubs and most trees, as well as mulching and insect control.

Deep Winter Pruning — December, January and February are excellent months for cutting back most shrubs and shade trees. Pruning while the plant is dormant inhibits growth that would be subject to cold damage during winter. A good trimming now encourages growth in the spring, and helps make plants more manageable.

This is also an excellent time for rejuvenation-pruning of overgrown, out-of-control plants or plants that have lost their natural shape due to improper trimming in the past. A deep pruning now provides a healthy start to controlling shape and size in the coming growth period. Be sure to reach inside the foliage a few inches below the outer edge as you snip. This encourages lower growth and gives plants a fuller look. +

Remember however that flowering shrubs and trees have different pruning schedules, depending on when they bloom or set their buds. A good rule of thumb for when to trim: if a plant blooms before May, it should be pruned directly after flowering. If it blooms after May, the tree or shrub should be pruned in early spring (March) in order to promote vigorous, early growth.

Mulching — Mulching around the base of plants during the winter will give some root protection from cold, help retain moisture and add organic matter to the soil. Mulching cold, tender plants and bulbs — such as agapanthus — will increase their chances of survival. We like to add a fresh layer of pine straw to beds after the leaves have fallen. This gives the barren, winter landscape a fresher look.

Watering — Newly planted materials should always be watered until their roots are established. Dry roots are more susceptible to cold damage than are wet roots because water acts as an insulator. Our winters can be quite dry, and it is essential that all plants be watered

See *Tips* page 4

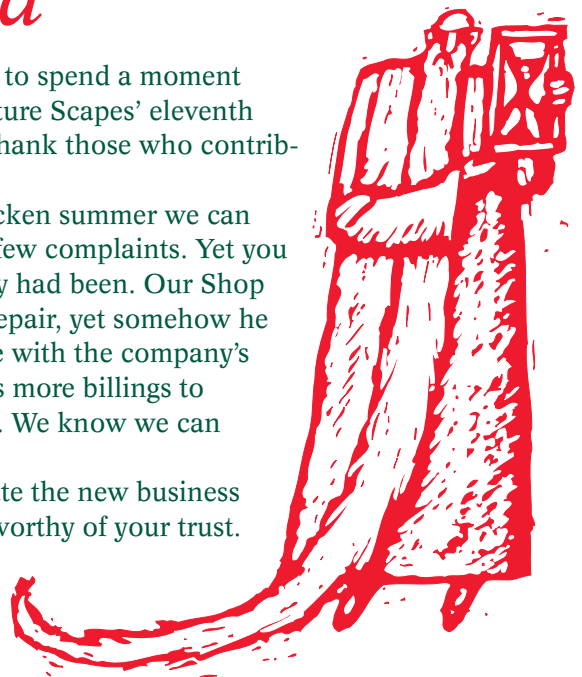
Reflections at Year's End

With a new year coming and the holidays in full swing, we'd like to spend a moment reflecting on the past year as well as counting our blessings. Nature Scapes' eleventh year in business has been one of its most successful, and we want to thank those who contributed to this success.

Our Field Crews have withstood the longest, hottest, drought-stricken summer we can remember. They worked 10 hour days in the heat, and we heard very few complaints. Yet you only had to see them at day's end to know how long and hard that day had been. Our Shop Manager had more mowers, blowers, trucks and edgers than ever to repair, yet somehow he kept things rolling. Our Office Staff had the challenge of keeping pace with the company's growth — which meant more employees and vendors to pay as well as more billings to prepare. Thanks to every Nature Scapes employee for a job well done. We know we can trust and depend on you, and this will ensure our future success!

Thanks also to our clients for your trust and support. We appreciate the new business you have given us this year, and will do everything we can to remain worthy of your trust.

A special "thank you" from Rick, Cynthia and Pam to Eve Shulmister of Axiom Press, Inc. for helping us produce this newsletter. She has had the difficult job of keeping us on schedule and keeping us in line; it was a monumental task!





Landscape Planning — An Excellent Investment!

— By Danna Cain, ASLA • Landscape Architect • Home & Garden Design, Inc.

No doubt you would agree that planning is critical to the achievement of personal success. Would you ever consider plunging into a career, financial investment, or your child's education without a strategy? Failing to plan in these important areas practically ensures that you will not reach your potential. Likewise, for a landscape to reach its fullest potential, it too must be fully planned. A good design is the first step to a successful landscape.

We refer to a landscape plan as an investment because paying up front for a good design saves money both immediately and in the long run. Let's take a look at why so many people realize this is a good investment:

A master plan gets you going in the right direction. Typically the first type of design made for a project is a master plan. This type of plan positions all the landscape and hardscape (walkways, patios, etc.) for a project while considering such necessities as erosion control, drainage, spatial planning, sun/shade and orientation.

That's a lot to think about! If you leave out even one of these elements, your project will have problems in the future. By hiring a consultant with the ability to see "the whole picture," you'll end up with a conceptual foundation that can be successfully developed in later years.

A good design protects you from making costly mistakes. The most costly landscaping mistakes I have seen are driven by the desire to "do" something this year to make one aspect of a project look better. This near-sighted approach ends up costing a lot of money in the long run. Have you ever experienced the need to cut down a tree and shrubs to add parking space? Have you ever lost an entire bed of plants because the drainage was bad in that area? In both situations, a

good plan would have prevented the wasted effort and lost money.

Maintain your style or theme. Your consultant will work with you to achieve a design style that introduces your property and sets the theme you want to convey. A plan creates standards that must be followed during all future construction and helps avoid the haphazard look that comes from subsequent changes in direction, style and opinion over the years.

A good consultant will help you to determine your priorities and budget. Be realistic and honest when communicating with your consultant. It is important that your design truly reflect what is economically feasible. I can't tell you how often I hear clients ask for flamboyant, large displays of year-round color. This can be provided, but it certainly costs more from an installation and maintenance point of view. A good designer is not driven by the potential for profit on a landscape installation; but rather she or he will seek to find creative ways of achieving what you want while working within your budget.

Landscape designs provide the opportunity for comparative bidding. A master plan enables contractors to price their installations, using a variety of plant sizes and/or different soil amendment procedures, depending on what your budget will allow. Every bid is based upon the same criteria, making them easy to compare. This takes less time than getting "estimates" from many contractors, all of whom have different ideas of what they want to sell you.

Gives families and committees a starting point for their discussions. How often have your potential projects ended up in an endless cycle of discussions that never lead to action? Typically, the reason for this is that the parties involved have differing motives and



goals. When a professional consultant is hired to act as the third party/decision-maker, a project is much more likely to be implemented.

Good landscape plans are designed to allow for the future growth of plant material. This reduces general maintenance and pruning. Many buildings are originally landscaped by a builder who attempts to make the biggest show he can while the property is for sale. In order to make this big show, he over-plants or chooses larger varieties. In either case, the plants quickly outgrow their space, which leads to excessive pruning. This not only increases maintenance costs but also destroys the natural forms of your plants.

Target the design to your maintenance budget. A good designer can help you make the best show for your money by carefully selecting the locations for color as well as the proper size and composition of plant beds. If money is limited, plan for more evergreens with colorful foliage and less high-maintenance perennial and annual color areas.

Registered landscape architects are trained design professionals. They know how to combine these many aspects of planning. Look for a consultant who knows soils, horticulture, local plants, drainage, erosion control, color, harmony, art, style, engineering and can tie it all together.



Rick's Picks — “Deck the Halls With Boughs of Holly”

What could be more beautiful at this season than to see a bright red berry peaking out beneath a lush green leaf? During the winter, some hollies offer their most beautiful show of the year.

Burford Holly

Ilex cornuta 'Burfordii' — This is one of the most popular hollies for hedges or screening. When fully grown, it reaches 15 feet in height. Growing at a moderate rate, this holly reaches full size in about 20 years. One of the heaviest fruiting hollies, the Burford will retain its fruit all winter — unless the birds find them first! A little trivia: This shrub originated at West View Cemetery, here in Atlanta, over 50 years ago.

Ilex cornuta 'D'Or' — Since variety is the spice of life, some people prefer this holly bush. Sharing the same growth and shape characteristics as the Burford, it bears yellow fruit.

Ilex cornuta 'Burfordii' nana — Dwarf Burford Holly only reaches 6 to 10 feet in height and is a little slower growing. Its shape looks very similar to the Burford Holly, although its leaves are slightly smaller.

Hybrid Hollies

These small trees are hybrids, grown for their compact pyramidal shape, most of them producing an abundance of berries. Do not plant them, however, if their maximum height cannot be retained. Topping hybrid hollies ruins their beautiful shape, and they should never be sheared. My favorite hybrids are:

Ilex x 'Nellie R. Stevens' — Nellie R. Stevens Holly has very glossy, dark-green, leathery leaves and bears bright scarlet berries. The mature height is about 35 feet. Its dense, pyramidal shape needs very little pruning.

Ilex x attenuata 'Savannah' — The Savannah Holly has a looser growth habit but still retains a beautiful shape. Producing clusters of red berries it grows to about 30 feet.

Ilex x 'Emily Bruner' — Emily Bruner Holly has a beautiful pyramidal shape and grows to about 20 feet in height. It has large, dark green leaves and large red fruit.

Other Berry Bushes

Nandina domestica — Worth a special mention for its outstanding berries, the Nandina is one of my favorites. This old-fashioned shrub has a lovely, fine texture and can provide a nice accent to most landscapes. Its maximum height is 8 feet.

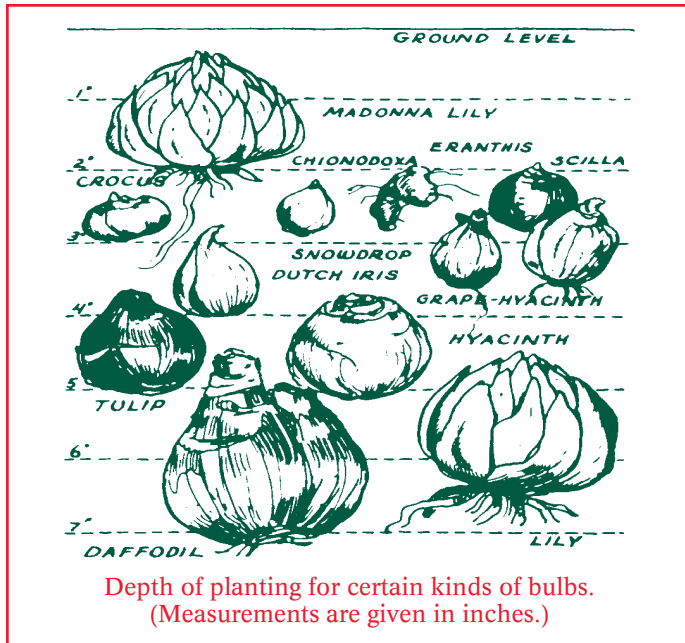
In winter the foliage takes on a red color, blending beautifully, with long clusters of red berries hanging from the top of its canes. Because of the Nandina's color change in the fall and winter, it is best not to plant this shrub against a red brick wall.

Improper pruning can ruin its shape, however. If the bush needs to be thinned, prune the longest canes in early spring, cutting them at various heights near the base.



— *Nellie R. Stevens Holly*





during any dry period, hot or cold. On cold days, it's best to water at root level, keeping water off plant leaves. Or you can water during the warmest part of the day so that foliage has time to dry before the sun goes down.

Irrigation Systems — Now is a good time to consider shutting down or adjusting your irrigation schedule to water later in the day. Once fall annuals have become established, the system can be shut down by bleeding off the pressure. If you decide to run the system through the winter, it's a good idea to adjust the clock to run later in the morning. A system that runs too early will create an unwanted winter wonderland!

Bulbs — December is the best time to plant spring-flowering bulbs. Plant in well-prepared soil with adequate sunlight (usually in full sun to part shade). The chart above illustrates the desired depth of planting for a few, popular bulbs.

Liriope — Cut back Liriope in January to early February before new growth begins. This will keep plants

+ looking fresh in the spring and remove any cold-damaged leaves.

Dormant Oil Spray — Spray for some insect infestations, such as scale, red spider mites, etc., in February by catching them before they ever have a chance to hatch. Dormant oil coats the insect eggs, killing them before warm, spring temperatures "wake them up" and they begin to feed.

Pre-emergents and early spring fertilization — February is the best time to apply pre-emergents to lawns and beds. A post emergent can also be applied to keep winter weeds in check. Fertilize lawns with a balanced fertilizer; this can be done along with the pre-emergents.

Who We Are

Cultivated News is published four times a year by Nature Scapes, Inc., for over ten years a provider of landscaping, maintenance, irrigation and floriculture services to the metropolitan Atlanta area.

Nature Scapes, Inc. is a charter member of GGIA – Georgia Green Industry Association, MALTA – Metro Atlanta Landscape & Turf Association and GTAI – Georgia Turfgrass Association, Inc. We also belong to the Southern Nurseryman's Association.

Natures Scapes, Inc. operates a drug-free workplace, as certified by the State Board of Workers' Compensation.

If you have any topics or questions you would like to see discussed or elaborated on in a future issue of this newsletter, please call and let us know.

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