



Nature Scapes, Inc.

Cultivated News

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Making A Case For Landscape Renovation: Part 2

— Rick Barnes

In the last issue of *Cultivated News* I discussed how the growth of trees creates a need to re-evaluate and upgrade the landscape from time to time.

In an urban setting, one of the greatest battles for natural selection takes place between lawn grasses and encroaching shade. Trees that are relatively small when first planted take hold and grow vigorously in the first 10 to 20 years after planting. In the process, they develop massive root systems, which compete with grass for water and nutrients, as well as a canopy which limits the light so necessary for lawn growth. Shade and lawns simply do not mix!

This scenario is further complicated by the fact that, in the metro-Atlanta latitude, there is not a single turf species which clearly outshines the rest: Fescue, a cool season turf, is beautiful from fall through spring. But it does not have an attractive appearance during our hot, dry summers. Its easy restoration through fall seeding however makes Fescue the least expensive turf to establish or renovate.

Bermuda and Zoysia, favorite warm-season grasses, look great in the heat of summer. But they brown with the first frost in November, remaining so until March at the very earliest. Due to its slow rate of growth, Centipede grass (another warm-season turf) requires the lowest maintenance. But many find its washed-out color objectionable, and too much or too little fertilizer can send an entire lawn into a tailspin.

So how does all this fit into the landscape renovation puzzle? For those who wish to keep their turf perhaps a slow evolution works best:

Bermuda is often installed in new landscapes because it is the cheapest sod to put down. With the first sign of shade however, Bermuda grass begins to fade. When faced with this, we typically suggest the substitution of a shade-tolerant ground cover (like Liriope or Euonymus). Yet often this is unacceptable to the client who had grass before and wants to keep it. That forces us onto an evolutionary merry-go-round,

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Giving Thanks

Another year seems to have flown by and once again we come to fall: a time of harvest, a time of bounty — a time to give thanks. Nature Scapes has seen many changes over the past nine months — positive and healthy changes, mostly relating to our acquisition of Greensphere.

With those changes came the challenge of incorporating another entire business (from bookkeeping to personnel) into our own. At the same time, we've sought to improve the quality of service our valued customers have come to expect. Fortunately, we have crossed most of the bridges this acquisition created with minimal disruption of service.

So now it's time to thank each of our clients for your continued business and support. Without you our business wouldn't exist!

We also thank our employees for their dedication and hard work. In this connection, we are quite pleased to report a very low employee turnover rate, even through this year of labor shortages. Personal and property accident rates have been quite low, as well. We have a lot to be thankful for and are counting our blessings!



Nature Scapes Sponsors English Class



Nature Scapes recently recognized 14 employees for successfully completing an English class given by the Community School at Parkview High. The class, “English As A Second Language,” ran for eight two-hour sessions and was given by Jim Simpson of Parkview. Since the participants had a wide range of English proficiency, the class did not follow a strict curriculum.

“We hope this class will be the first of many,” said Nature Scapes President, Rick Upchurch. In addition to an emphasis on spoken English, future classes may be geared toward achieving compliance with the regulations of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, obtaining a driver’s license, writing and of course, landscaping. *Congratulations to our students!*



Back row (left to right): Antonio Ochoa, Francisco Gonzales, Juan Chacon, Orlando Ardon, Juan Paz, Jim Simpson (teacher), Francisco Chacon.

Middle row (left to right): Jose Chacon, Jose A. Paz, Miguel Tejada, Juan C. Chacon, Rene Hernandez, Juan Tejada, Jose Quijada (attende). **In front:** Maricio Monterola. **Not pictured:** Mario Chacon.

Fall Is A Great Time For Color!

We have always looked forward to autumn as the time when the “leaves change color.” In reality, the glorious fall colors we witness each year have been there since the time the trees first leafed out in spring. Among other things, leaves are composed of layers of pigments. The beautiful reds, yellows, and oranges we see before the leaves drop off are masked through the growing season by chlorophyll, a green pigment that allows the plant to produce food. Angle of sunlight, shorter days and cooler temperatures cause the layer of Chlorophyll to break down, revealing other colors underneath. Soon after the color display, the leaf abscises (falls off), an adaptation to winter survival employed by many plants in our temperature zone.

Here are just a few of the plants which will give you a great display of autumn color:

Trees:

Red Maple (Acer rubrum)

This long-lived shade tree grows 40 to 50 feet in height,

with a spread somewhere between 25 and 35 feet. Plant your Maple in sun or shade, then sit back and enjoy its rapid growth. For best effect in autumn, plant these trees in groups. They prefer medium to high amounts of moisture.

Ginkgo (Ginkgo biloba)

The Ginkgo is a primitive plant which has existed since the age of the dinosaur. In autumn its fan-shaped leaves turn bright gold. When young, the tree is quite slender, pyramidal and rather spiky. With age its shape becomes broader and more regular, reaching a height of 40 to 70 feet, with a spread of some 20 to 40 feet. Although its growth rate is slow (often taking 20 years to reach maturity) the Ginkgo grows well by streets and makes an excellent specimen for large areas.

Shrubs:

Winged Euonymus (Euonymus alatus)

The green, slightly mottled foliage of this shrub turns



Stewardship in the Urban Forest

— Rick Barnes

One day a friend and I were enduring the steam bath that is August in Atlanta when he looked at me and said, “The only thing that makes Atlanta bearable is the trees!” Trees are the jewel in Atlanta’s crown, and there is no better example than Druid Hills for how people can live harmoniously with an urban forest.

Living among the trees is not without its price, however. Just ask Eunice Rojas, a Druid Hills resident who, with her daughter, watched helplessly as the Blizzard of ‘93 blew a 70 foot Loblolly Pine through the roof of her home. One limb went completely through the roof and ceiling, dropping debris on the chair she had just vacated when her daughter called her to the window.

Freak storms notwithstanding, other trees become victims of environmental stress accumulated over years and sometimes decades. Living in the shade is a pleasurable experience, but we must consider their care if we are to continue living harmoniously with these old trees. The keys to stewardship are safety, prevention, maintenance, and re-planting.

Safety

The notion of safety provides both an incentive for proper care and the justification for its expense. Trees should be inspected at reasonable intervals for overall health and structural stability. In addition, dead limbs should be properly pruned to prevent further damage.

“Most trees that fall had pre-existing wounds which led to rot,” says Spense Rosenfeld. He owns a local tree service known as Arboguard.

Walter Reeves is a DeKalb County Agent for the Cooperative Extension Service. He agrees adding, “Accumulated stress from periods of drought, excess rainfall, soil compaction and the stress induced from trying to establish grass under trees over and over again all result in a net loss of roots. The tree is always the loser in root wars.”

Prevention

Proper pruning and inspection is the best way to guarantee prevention of tree loss and the property damage which can result. These practices can best be

applied to younger trees. According to Mr. Reeves, corrective pruning should continue into the mature phase (25 years or more) and can protect against many later problems. He also suggests thinning out other trees that may compete later for nutrients and sunlight. Reshaping the landscape to accommodate the tree will result in a longer mature life and a minimum of problems.

Maintenance

Misconceptions abound regarding the general maintenance of large trees. Many people feel they cannot be watered effectively. But a cheap soaker-hose and timer can apply 500 gallons of water in just 3 to 4 hours.

Other misunderstandings concern aeration, drainage and fertilization. Arboguard aerates trees with heavily compacted soil by drilling a series of 2-inch holes to a depth of 15 inches throughout the root zone of the tree. Fertilization is accomplished by high-pressure injection of liquid nutrients into the soil to prevent runoff.

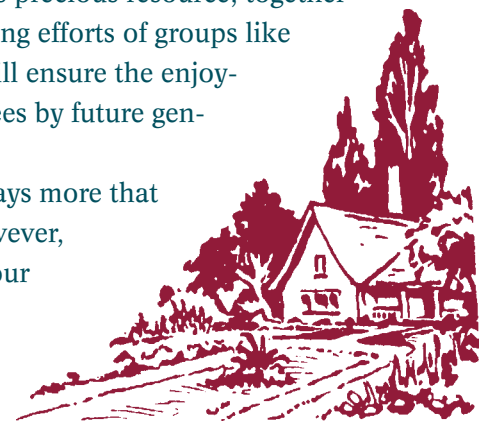
The misconception that kills the most trees, however, has to do with knowing where the roots are. Marcia Bansley of Trees Atlanta believes that altering the grade and/or excessively disturbing roots in the top 6-24 inches of soil is the greatest killer of trees in our city. Even seemingly minor alterations, like the construction of a patio in a tree’s root area, can cause major harm. These projects should be approached with caution.

Replanting

So what will be the fate of the urban forest? Increased awareness of this precious resource, together with the replanting efforts of groups like Trees Atlanta, will ensure the enjoyment of older trees by future generations.

There is always more that can be done however, beginning with our own backyards.

See *Stewardship*
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Every one of us should evaluate our own little corner of the forest to determine if improvements can be made.

According to Gary Moll, a spokesman for American Forests, metro Atlanta's urban forest has declined by about 65 percent since 1972. An environmental organization based in Washington, D.C., American Forests recently completed a study which concludes that since 1972, average summer temperatures in downtown Atlanta and Hartsfield International Airport have increased by 6 to 9 degrees more than those of the surrounding countryside.

Moll points out that, in addition to contributing to Atlanta's air-quality problems, this heat has increased cooling costs considerably. Furthermore, as the weather heats up, the number of smog-producing chemical reactions tends to increase. This, in turn, creates "inversions" — situations where Atlanta's

increased heat levels cause the development of low pressure areas which trap hot air and pollution, and hold them stationary over the city.

The American Forestry Association has observed that there are over 100 million energy-efficient tree planting sites in the U.S. alone — sites that, if planted with the proper tree, would reduce the heating and cooling costs of buildings in their shade. Replacing the trees that we lose is thus very important.

Since we have chosen to dominate the urban forest and to live in it, we have the responsibility or assisting Mother Nature with its renewal. Only in doing so can we insure the longevity of the forest and thus ensure its continued enjoyment by our children.

In addition to the comments of Rick Barnes, this essay includes information provided by an article in The Atlanta Constitution.

Nature Scapes Goes High Tech

The world of star wars technology can now be found on the belts of all Nature Scapes/Greensphere Managers and Foremen! A sophisticated communication system provided by Motorola and Nextel now allows instant communication between any 2 people in our 25-unit network. The system boasts private-line radio communications, cellular telephone service, alpha-numeric paging, voice mail, as well as fax storage and transmission.

This system is an investment by Nature Scapes for greater efficiency and quicker resolution of service requests through faster communication.



Plants and Pets

— Rodney Anderson



While maintaining Pansy beds in the past, I have noticed many are ruined when pets use those areas for a latrine. This problem is most common in apartment and condominium communities.

Cats do their business and then scratch the dirt around to cover it up. When doing so, they pull plants out of the ground or tear the blooms and foliage. In addition to creating an unsightly flower bed, pet fecal matter soon decays, leaving ammonia. That ammonia burns flowers in the immediate area and causes the soil to become acidic. Over time, this creates an absorption problem for flowers trying to take in fertilizer. To normalize the pH level, the soil must then be amended with lime.

This problem is not limited to flower beds. Turf areas can also be affected. Where pet owners walk their dogs, allowing them to urinate on ornamentals or turf, a chemical imbalance occurs in the ground. The resulting lack of chlorophyll causes turf to spot.

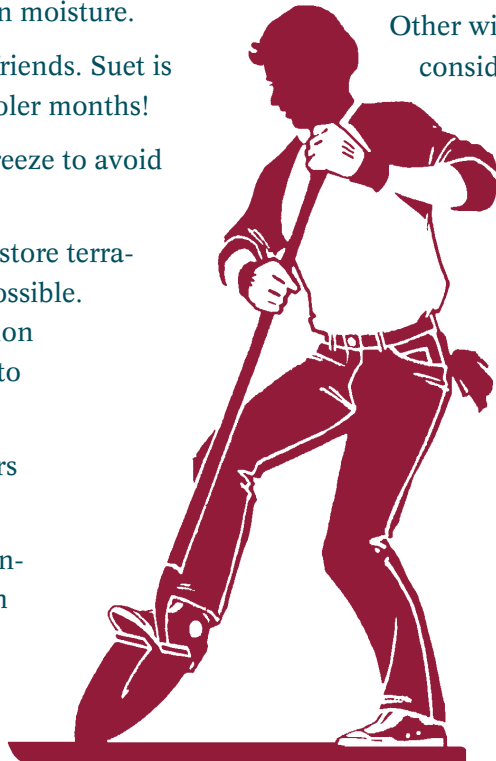
So if you want a green and colorful landscape, please be conscientious when taking your pets on their morning and afternoon breaks. Your money pays for enhancing these areas with year-round color. Being a responsible pet-owner helps keep your investment healthy and appealing.

Focus on Fall —

Autumn Chores

Winter is just around the corner and here is a checklist of “Things To Do”:

- Plant, plant plant! This is a good time to plant almost anything from pansies to fall vegetables, spring bulbs, shrubs and trees. Sow wildflower seeds after warm temperatures (and the chance for early germination) have passed.
- Water! Cooler temperatures do not guarantee more rainfall. Fall is traditionally the driest time of year in Atlanta. So if the rainfall is low or nonexistent, remember to water.
- Fertilize cool-season lawns.
- Aerate and overseed Fescue lawns.
- Rake leaves often to keep off lawn areas. Compost the clippings, if possible, for use later as winter mulch.
- After leaf drop, refresh pine straw mulch. Also mulch around plants to help retain moisture.
- Don't forget about our feathered friends. Suet is always a welcome treat during cooler months!
- Empty birdbaths before the first freeze to avoid cracking.
- Before the first freeze, empty and store terra-cotta pots out of the weather, if possible. Constant expansion and contraction during cold weather causes them to crack and/or deteriorate.
- Divide perennials or ground covers such as Liriope.
- Bring in tropicals, such as Bougainvillea and Mandevilla. Prune them back one third and store them in a cool, dark place. They will require little water in the dormant state, but do not allow them to dry completely.



A Good Time to Dig in the Dirt

Fall is one of the best times to plant in Georgia. Installing flowers, shrubs and trees in autumn allows them more time to become established before summer's hot, dry weather sets in. (Hot summers take a much greater toll on the landscape than cold winters.)

For color during the cold season, we mostly plant Pansies. They stay fresh and healthy-looking during the long months of fall and winter. Last year was an exception, however, as seemingly relentless cold weather battered most of the Pansies we planted.

One of the easiest ways to add an extra blast of color is to mix bulbs in with the Pansies. Annual bulbs are great for this application, especially Tulips. However, others can be used as well, including Allium and Hyacinth. Do not forget Daffodils, Crocus and Muscari, which are reliable *perennial* bulbs and are better used outside the annual bed area.

Other winter flowers which we hope you will consider: Snapdragons, Dianthus, Flowering

Cabbage, Flowering Kale and even Parsley! Yes, that little green sprig that decorates the food on your plate adds welcome evergreen texture to the winter landscape. One final suggestion is the Viola, which looks like a Dwarf Pansy. All of these plants come in a wide variety of colors, are low-growing and thus maintain a neat appearance in the winter landscape.

Of course, like Pansies, all these plants are susceptible to extreme cold. However, like Pansies, they all tend to bounce right back when milder conditions return. Please call us if we can help you diversify your winter color!

Safety Update

We are proud to announce that Pete Knapik has been named Safety Manager for Nature Scapes. Pete holds a B.S. degree in Industrial Health and Safety Management from Indiana State University. He will be responsible for our Safety Bingo, Uniform Policy Compliance and Weekly Safety Meetings.

Pete also serves as a Maintenance Foreman. We feel this on-site exposure gives him more insight into safety concerns, equipment use, appropriate safety gear and other, related matters. Safety is an extremely important concern at Nature Scapes. And we are sure Pete will use his background to the fullest advantage in helping us maintain a low (hopefully zero) accident rate.

Renovation from page 1

from the least shade-tolerant to the most: Bermuda to Zoysia to Fescue to ground cover.

Obviously, eliminating a step or two in the progression will save money in the long run, but unless you are ready to break out the chainsaw and cut down your trees, the shade will eventually win!

Color from page 2

bright scarlet in fall. In winter, its twig structure continues the bush's visual interest. When mature, the Winged Euonymus reaches 5 to 8 feet in height, with a spread of 3 to 5 feet. Its flamboyant coloring and interesting texture makes this shrub an excellent candidate for industrial parks and large-scale properties.

Oakleaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)

This bush provides lively color in summer and brilliant color in fall. It grows quickly, with white flowers (which bloom in June) giving way in fall to orange-red leaves. At maturity, its height (4 to 6 feet) often equals its spread. This shrub adds a strong-textured accent to large-scale gardens and parks.

Weeds:

Ever wonder if Poison Ivy has any redeeming value? It has a great red fall color!

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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