

Investment and Interest

- Two Reasons to Consider Perennials & Specimen Plants as Additions to Seasonal Color Beds

—*Pamela Lasota & Mike Williams*

The use of annuals in seasonal color beds is a short-term investment in curb appeal; however, it is an investment and can make up a considerable part of the yearly landscape budget. When investing capital in stocks, bonds, mutual funds, etc., profit, usually in the form of interest, is the primary goal. Adding perennials and hardy specimen plants to seasonal color beds is an investment that can produce interest; i.e., aesthetically.

Diversifying seasonal color beds has more than the obvious advantage of cost reduction:

- Establishes a backbone for seasonal color changes.
- Expands the pallet of plants for each cultural condition.
- Allows use of different leaf shapes and textures, adding dimension to plantings.
- Gives more design choices in a mixed planting.
- Introduces plant material that will attract birds and butterflies.
- Increases color choices.

There are also disadvantages to changing the seasonal color approach; the most important of these is that it is essential to have a good design to keep mixed plantings from looking “hodge-podge” or “busy”. Maintaining a harmonious blend of textures, colors and sizes is very important. Also, seasonal change is reduced and the permanent plantings must remain even when perennials, such as Purple Coneflower, are dormant and will not give interest in the winter. For this reason, placement of perennials is very important, so that they will not interfere with plantings for the fall/winter season.

If you are interested in speaking with a designer regarding a change in your seasonal color approach, please call our designer, Mike Williams, at extension 31. Increasing seasonal interest while decreasing cost is something to consider.



SOME EXCELLENT PLANT SELECTIONS FOR DIVERSIFYING ARE:

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| A. Miss Huff Lantana | (Perennial) Orange/yellow/pink mixed, blooms all summer. |
| B. Little Suzie Black-Eyed Susan | (Perennial) Yellow/Gold with black face, blooms all summer. |
| C. Purple Coneflower | (Perennial) Purple flowers with black face, blooms all summer. |
| D. Disco Belle Hibiscus | (Perennial) Red, Pink or White, large blooms all summer. |
| E. Hosta | (Perennial) Various color blooms & foliage, foliage attractive all summer. |
| F. Nearly Wild Rose | (Semi-Evergreen) Fuschia, disease resistant rose, blooms all summer. |
| G. Autumn Fern | (Evergreen) Foliage, new growth bronzy-red colored. |
| H. Helleborus | (Evergreen) Creamy White, Various other colors, blooms in late winter. |
| I. Cypress | (Evergreen) Variegated Yellow/Green foliage, foliage attractive all year. |

Alhambra Wins “Grand Prize” Among Its Peers

—Cynthia Upchurch

We would like to share with you another award Nature Scapes recently received from GGIA, the Georgia Green Industry Association.

Alhambra was our choice in submitting to the GGIA for the category of Commercial Maintenance. This property is managed by Warshaw Properties and Nature Scapes has provided landscape services for Alhambra now for 8 years.

Built in 1920, as a “suburban-rural” apartment building away from the hustle and bustle of downtown Atlanta, it is still functional for its original purpose nearly 80 years later. The actual apartment building itself is quite unique with its Arab-influences of Architecture. Like the original palace with its cool courtyards of Moorish Kings, Atlanta’s Alhambra offers a horticultural moat of serenity along busy Peachtree Road in Buckhead.

About 6 years ago, all of the original large trees died due to stress and old age. Nature Scapes renovated the landscaping in 1992 into the beautiful garden it has become. Improvements are ongoing. Last spring, we expanded the annual planting beds that flank both “bridges” on the proper-



ty. This allowed floriculturists at Nature Scapes to be more creative in these areas. Banana Plants were used to flank the main entrances which lend a unique accent to the property.

There are several significant hurdles in keeping Alhambra looking its best. However, we strive to maintain the beautiful grounds, and in turn proudly received the “Grand Prize” ribbon for the maintenance of the property.

Nature Scapes recently presented a copy of the award to the owner of Warshaw Properties. We hope they are as proud of our work at Alhambra as we are!

EMPLOYEE UPDATE • EMPLOYEE UPDATE • EMPLOYEE UPDATE • EMPLOYEE UPDATE

Nature Scapes Promotes from Within!

—Rick Barnes



Allen



Rusty

Filling two voids in the landscape management team, Nature Scapes looked to a couple of our own who are suited to the task. Allen Clemons, an 8-year veteran of Nature Scapes was selected for his extensive experience with the company as well as his expert management and communication skills. Rusty Lee has been with Nature Scapes for two years. He has earned an Associate Degree in Horticulture from Gwinnett Tech, and is a Certified Turfgrass Professional with the Professional Lawn Care Association of America. Rusty is presently working to become a Georgia Certified Landscape Professional.

“It is extremely fortunate that we needed two managers,” comments Nature Scapes’ President, Rick Upchurch. “It would have been tough trying to decide between Allen and Rusty.”

The two started their new roles on March 1. Congratulations, Allen and Rusty!



FURTHER CONGRATULATIONS:

Congratulations are in order for Rusty Lee, our Route Manager and his wife Rayna. They were blessed with a son, Caleb R. Lee on November 25, 1997. Caleb weighed in at 7 lbs. 15 oz. and 21” long. They have a 3 year-old daughter, Taylor, who will certainly be a big help to mom.

IN MEMORY OF . . .

Our condolences go out to three long-time employees of ours, Juan, Miguel & Antonio Tejada for the recent loss of their mother.

Also, to the family of Jesus Landaverde, an employee that passed away on Christmas day. Our thoughts and prayers are with these families.



Bringing Back “Elm Street”

—Rick Barnes

Creating a sense of community in urban America conjures up many nostalgic images — of shady tree-lined lanes, neighbors gathering to chat on their early evening stroll, children playing on spacious lawns while parents mingle and watch. As the new millennium looms in Atlanta, these images seem a distant memory, faced with the reality of today's smaller cluster-home communities.

While the community properties of today *are* smaller, there are many elements which work well in giving that feeling of “Elm Street.” The setting and flow through a community can add a lot to its sense of place. The architecture and finishes can set a community mood. Useful, practical and colorful landscapes can be the final touch in setting the tone for a community. The setting and architecture are elements which are more or less static. However, landscaping by its very nature is always in a state of change and is an element that can, with relative ease, be manipulated and updated to enhance, alter or completely change the feel of the community.

Our desire to have a landscape with a “mature” look in as short a time as possible has led to the utilization of plant material that gives that result. Bradford Pears, Leyland Cypress, and Variegated Privet are plants that have seen great demand simply because they grow fast. Other fast-growing trees such as Sycamore, Silver Maple and even River Birch have been used for similar reasons. Such plants do fill in landscape spaces quickly, but when considering the long-term look of the community, many of these plants fall short of the mark.

The problem with planting for the short-term, (which I define as 10-20 years) is twofold. First, those fast-growing plants tend to have problems as they move into their second decade. Bradford Pear, for example, becomes a victim of ice and wind as it gets older. Once those limbs are broken, the tree will never again regain its shape. Silver Maple, which we rarely see planted in the landscape these days, has a root system that spreads across the ground giving formidable competition to any understory planting. Second, plants utilized for color and rapid-growth in the landscape, such as Variegated Privet, often overgrow their boundaries and become maintenance problems.

I recently spent some time with Mr. Burt Wittenberg, Landscape Committee Chairman for the Ridgemere community. The purpose of our meeting was to address this very subject. Ridgemere was developed in 1984. It was initially planted with Pin Oak, Red Maple, Sycamore, Bradford Pear, and Crape Myrtles to create a colorful, shady community. Twelve years later, however, the Sycamores are showing signs of dieback stress and many of the Bradford Pears have outgrown their allotted space.

The goal of the homeowners at Ridgemere is to re-think their selection of tree species to provide a unified sense of community into the next century. We developed a short list of trees, based on the best of those which are already present, as well as new and different varieties of trees which may be well suited to create their ideal.

We determined that the Oaks and Maples were the best selections for the long term, and significant numbers of both are on the property already. Planting additional trees of this type creates a sense of unity throughout the property and eliminates the need for starting from scratch.

However, ruling out the use of new or different varieties could limit the potential for maximum landscaping effect. In the case of Ridgemere, we determined that the Oriental Elm, (*Ulmus parvifolia*) would be an excellent addition to the selection of trees used on the property. The landscape merit of this species lies in its loose, open crown, small leaves translating into reduced fall leaf-litter, and beautiful peeling (exfoliating) bark. Additionally, the trees' non-evasive root system lends itself to the urban setting.

To provide a spring flowering alternative to the Bradford Pear, consider Dogwood, Kousa Dogwood, Okame Cherry, Redbud, or White Redbud. These trees generally have greater longevity than the Pear and hold up better in the landscape.

Utilizing such a far-sighted approach when replacing trees accomplishes two things. First, utilizing what is already present and working from a short list of additional trees leads to repetition of landscape elements throughout the property, thus an enhanced sense of community. Second, careful selection of replacement trees will render the landscaping useful beyond the two-decade problem zone.

Careful consideration of community goals and different plant materials can help you achieve that feeling of “Elm Street” in your community.



Maintenance Update

Who We Are



Cultivated News is published four times a year by Nature Scapes, Inc., for fifteen 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 GTA — Georgia Turfgrass Association, Inc. We also belong to the Southern Nurseryman's Association.

Nature 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 the newsletter, please call and let us know.

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As you read in the last issue of *Cultivated News*, many landscape maintenance activities take place during the winter.

Probably the most noticeable evidence of the presence of Nature Scapes maintenance crews on your property is the aftermath of winter pruning. Winter pruning accomplishes two major objectives: bringing the plants back into scale with their surroundings and cultural improvement by opening up the plant to light and air movement while physically removing any pest problems. Similarly, groundcovers of Liriope species are mowed at this time to give them a fresher look when the bibs grow out in the spring.

Of course, winter is also a time for re-mulching of properties with pine straw or Nature Scapes mulch.

Turf areas receive their first application in February, consisting of pre-emergent herbicide, broadleaf weed control, and slow-release fertilizer.

Trees and shrubs receive dormant oil treatments and early applications of insecticide to keep early spring insect outbreaks in check. Slow-release fertilizer is also applied in February and March.

Rodney Anderson, Nature Scapes Maintenance Manager, predicts that warm-season turf (Bermuda, Zoysia, and Centipede) will exhibit stress symptoms in the spring due to the mild winter temperatures we have experienced and the excessive rainfall. This has also caused a premature breakdown of pre-emergent herbicides applied in the fall. Any damage to the landscape in the spring could be compounded if we were to experience a severe cold snap late in the winter.



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