



EVERGREEN LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATES

DESIGN • CONSTRUCTION • MAINTENANCE

GREEN THOUGHTS FOR GARDENING, LANDSCAPING, AND MAINTENANCE

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Bloom Review: Fall

Aster novae-angliae 'Purple Dome'
Common name: Purple Dome Aster
Bloom time: Late September-Frost
Flower color: Vibrant purple
Height: 18-24"
Clusters of blooms are very showy from a long distance and one of the latest flowers to finish. The full sun perennial is known as Purple Dome because of its nice rounded upright habit and stays more compact than other asters.



Anemone robustissima
Common name: Grape leaf Anemone
Bloom time: Early to late fall (September-October)
Flower Color: Pink-lavendar
Height: 24-36"
Possess very substantial grape leaf foliage and a grand upright habit for bold statements in the shade garden. Needs a lot of room as it can spread.



Clematis terniflora
Common name: Sweet Autumn Clematis
Bloom time: Late summer and fall (August -October)
Flower color: White
Height: Vine will twine 20 ft or more
White flowers are star-like and very abundant. Like all clematis, they like shade near the base of the plant, but sun or partial shade for its foliage and flowers. Can handle more shade than other clematis. Has a nice fall color and seed heads provide winter interest.



Tricyrtis sp.
Common name: Toad Lily
Bloom time: Fall to Late Fall (Late September-October)
Flower color: Pinks, yellow, purples with speckled petals
Height: Vary depending on variety (12"-36")
The one inch sized blooms look quite a bit like orchids, but are borne only singly on the plant. Best used in woodland settings and full shade gardens.



- 1. Purple Dome Aster
- 2. Grape Leaf Anemone
- 3. Sweet Autumn Clematis
- 4. Toad Lily

THE SCIENCE OF SOIL: why it's so important we get it right

SOIL

C You might think about skipping this article. It sounds pretty boring. However, soil is the foundation under which a landscape can thrive. Without getting too detailed into the chemistry, this article attempts to unravel one of the most mysterious and sometimes frustrating parts of landscaping, the soil, and some ideas for improving its common problems.

E It is a well known fact that much of the soil in the Chicago suburbs has a lot of clay, which holds too much water and doesn't give enough air to the roots of plants. A soil is made of three types of particles. They are sand, silt, and clay. Sand is largest and lets the most air and water through, and clay being the smallest. A good soil for plants will have an even amount of each. Very infrequently is this the case, especially in areas of newer construction. That fact alone doesn't tell enough about the soil make-up of individual home properties. There are a few tests that can be done by homeowners to test the exact needs of their soil.

The first is a Perk Test. It is often not practical for new clients because it involves digging holes in the yard and thus is often hard to get a homeowner to agree with. However, if major plantings are being done,

especially for new construction, this test can tell a lot about the drainage of the yard. The idea is simple. Dig a one foot square hole that is one foot deep in an area that seems to be a lowspot. Fill the hole with water and watch it drain. The magic time frame is two hours. If it takes less than this, the soil may be too sandy and thus lack nutrients or dry out too fast. If it takes more than four hours, it could be quite difficult to grow plants, as they will be sitting in water much of the time. This should be done a second time, as the second test will be more accurate. Your landscape designer may suggest this if your site is of newer construction, if poor drainage is suspected, or if drainage problems have been noted in other sites in the area.

The second test is another important tool for understanding soil. This is simply a soil test. It is more often done by avid gardeners, but equally important if you are doing a large amount of landscaping. The containers are usually obtained from the County Extension. Soil from all areas of the yard should be taken and mixed together to get the more accurate idea of the soil makeup. This soil sample should be sent to a university or soil laboratory. Lists of the laboratories in the area that do soil evaluations are on the McHenry, Kane, and DuPage county extension websites, as well as others. The test will return with a print out of the soils needs. This test is most important for identifying if there is a deficiency in one of the essential nutrients and the PH of the soil. It will also explain what type of additives to put in the soil to change the PH and add necessary elements. It is important to follow the amounts indicated in the soil test because adding more than recommended is a waste of money. The soil can only absorb so much and extra will just run off and end up in the ground water. Soil tests are recommended every five to six years. I would suggest

that if significant changes do not occur this might not be necessary, unless you are an avid gardener. If a new large construction project is done on the house, new landscaping, or significant decline in plants is noted, a re-test might be needed.

To fix PH and soil deficiency is relatively simple. In the clay soils of the Midwest, just as water is held heavily, so are fertilizers. It is for this reason that fertilizing trees and shrubs is only needed once per year in the spring. Also, if you fertilize your lawn, usually no additional fertilizer is needed for the trees. For correcting soil nutrient deficiencies, a balanced fertilizer of 13-13-13 will usually be sufficient to correct them. A slow release fertilizer is best because it is only needed once or twice per growing season, while also minimizing nitrogen run off. PH is not normally a problem in this area, but additives can be used to bring PH to a desired level.

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Improving drainage needs, as determined in the Perk Test are much more difficult to improve, require more intuitive techniques, and can be much more costly. The most effective option to improving drainage is to plant the ball of trees and shrubs 6 inches higher than ground level. This will create a slight berm. Depending on the amount of trees and their ball size, there may not be a need to bring in any more soil. The soil being dug out of the planting hole can be used to build up the berm.



"Another option that may be done in conjunction with elevating the plant material is to put drainage tiles in the bed to move water more quickly"

to handle the excess water, than the crown of the tree. If very little topsoil is found, as can happen in new construction, additional topsoil may be necessary to create the berm.

Another option that may be done in conjunction with elevating the plant material is to put drainage tiles in the bed to move water more quickly to areas of lower elevation. This only works if there is enough decrease in elevation to allow the water to move. A tile with perforations is used to allow surface water to move into the tile and then to a storm drain. Care must be taken to make sure soil does not clog the perforations in the tile.

Normally, a tree should be planted at the height it was originally grown at, but in areas of poor drainage, the crown of the tree, or the area right at the base of the trunk, should not be in the ground. Roots are more likely

One technique that is sometimes used is to improve the soil around the ball of the tree with new looser soil. This is not a recommended option. The planting holes should be filled with soil similar to the surrounding

soil, not brand new soil. This is because, the new looser soil will dry out faster, and the native clay soil will not give up any water to the drier soil. Therefore, it will be difficult to keep the new plants from drying out. The best way to modify this technique is to mix new soil with the surrounding soil and add this back into the planting hole around the new tree or shrub. That way the drainage is improved, but the soil in the planting hole is not completely different than the soil in the rest of the yard.

The makeup of soil is very important to the abilities of plants to excel. Many plant problems can be linked to poor soil content and poor soil drainage. Knowing what you are dealing with can help to decide what improvements to make. Utilize the knowledge of landscape professionals to help review which improvements will be worth trying, and which is not worth the cost.

ARE YOUR TREES HUNGRY?

Trees and shrubs should get the same level of care that your lawn receives. Usually trees and shrubs get much of the nutrients they need from the fertilizer that is put on the lawn. Unfortunately, this means that the lawn will be losing some of the nutrients that it needs to grow and be healthy. Fertilizing trees and shrubs ensures that both they and the lawn get all the nutrients that are required.

There are two ways to tell if your tree needs fertilizer. The easy way is to simply look at it. A light green or yellow-green color indicates that it is short on nutrients. Another indication is if it has a lot of dead wood, sparse foliage, or if the new growth is shorter than it should be. Dark green leaves and excessive growth of new shoots means you can delay fertilizing for another year.

When necessary, Deep Root Feeding allows the fertilizer to be delivered right into the tree's root system. A slow-release fertilizer is used since it will not burn the roots. It can be distributed evenly around the tree in holes drilled about one foot deep and two feet apart.

Deciduous trees and shrubs have a special need for nitrogen. They should be fertilized in either the early spring or late fall. This will keep the height of their growing season in mid-summer and will protect the plants from sustaining damage to new growth as the winter approaches.



FALL IS A GREAT TIME
FOR PLANTING

- * BULBS
- * TREES AND SHRUBS
- * PERENNIALS
- * PANSIES

There is more to plant in fall than bulbs - you can plant many perennials, grasses, trees, and shrubs, and even some annuals or vegetables in early fall! The fall planting season generally runs from the beginning of August until the ground freezes.

THE WELL TRAFFICKED GARDEN: attracting wildlife to your yard

Who says there is nothing interesting going on in the garden in the winter, or that insects are a bad sign in a garden? Be a nature freak, enjoy the little things in life, be one with nature. You may think “it’s for the birds”, but landscaping for “the birds, squirrels, bees, butterflies, deer and foxes” can be rewarding. Whether you enjoy watching nature as a relaxing pastime during all seasons of the year, or you feel it’s your human responsibility to leave a little something for the little guy, here are a few additions to aid in your objectives.

Food for thought. It might be tempting to chop down all those unsightly perennials after they are done blooming; it is certainly more visually pleasing. There are plant options that have interesting seed structures long after they have died.

Some examples are coneflowers, black eyed susans, or money plants. The seeds can be food for wildlife during the scarcity of winter, while also being stable enough to add visual interest in the dormant months.

Splish-splash, what a well designed bath. Ask anyone with a pond; a welcome side benefit is that the wildlife just seem to literally flock towards it. Besides the fish that clients often purchase, frogs, birds and sometimes turtles will find their way to the water almost immediately. Just remember that there may be some unwelcome guests, namely herons. They may need a few deterrents so that they don’t disrupt the balanced ecosystem by catching dinner.

All creatures great and small. The bees and butterflies will be attracted to most flowers. For those allergic or scared of bees, this is often unavoidable. Where you plant will determine your enjoyment or avoidance of them. Bees prefer sunny locations over shade and favor sheltered areas over windy areas. Plants like thyme, bee balm, and catmint are bee loving plants. Also, bees are attracted to blue, white, yellow, and shades of purple. Tubular shaped flowers attract butterflies and hummingbirds because both of their methods for feeding incorporate sucking nectar from deep down in flowers.

It is important to choose a few clumps of native or straight species rather than cultivars. As the plants are bred for flower size, longevity and the like, the production of nectar and pollen decreases, and thus is less of a productive food source. Great plants to incorporate are cardinal flower, penstemon, phlox, dianthus, and butterfly weed. Butterfly weed is of the Asclepias family, which is the primary source of food for the caterpillar of the monarch butterfly.



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A fruit cocktail of shrubs.

Viburnums, serviceberry, and deciduous holly are among several varieties of shrubs that will feed birds and various squirrels with their fruit production. Creating hedges out of some of these species or adding some climbing plants provides shelter to birds and even over-winter some butterfly species. Many homeowners worry that the birds or the fruit will make a mess. Most berries do not end up falling to the ground because the birds will eat them off first. Also, if you are worried about birds making a mess near cars, driveways or walkways, keep these species further away in the yard.

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Falling on the lawn is not going to hurt anything. Remember, once the berry source is gone, so will the mess of the birds and in a rain or two, no one will know they were even there.

Condos or single family homes. It all depends on the species and what you want to see. In the winter, birds can benefit greatly from a little man made construction. Robins are territorial and want bird boxes with open fronts and will not share their nests. Finches will double up with others. Keep bird baths unfrozen if possible or run heaters in the ponds. Also, make sure towards the end of the winter after much of the natural vegetation has been stripped, that supplemental food is placed outside if you wish to continue a large parade of bird species.

Snug as a bug in a rug or at least your compost pile. Snakes, rodents and insects may hibernate in your compost pile. Providing other debris like fallen logs provide places to bundle up for the winter. Just be

careful if you are an early spring gardener as you just might disturb these species while they are still trying to sleep.

Waging chemical warfare. There is a careful balance between the use of chemicals and the avoidance of them. Remember that a well balanced ecosystem will allow for all species to keep in check. Attract birds, they will keep down on the insects, attract insects and the garden will flourish with flowers, and healthy soil. There is of course no way to completely decrease chemical use like Japanese beetles that have no predators to keep their populations down. Read labels carefully as to not use an excess, watch nitrogen levels, and use organic if possible.



HELPFUL WEBSITES:

1. **Soil Testing**
<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/soiltest>
2. **University of Illinois extension**
<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu>
3. **Low Voltage Lighting**
<http://www.fx1.com>
4. **EverGreen Landscape**
www.evergreenlandscape.net

A FLAIR FOR ELEGANCE

Benefits of low voltage landscape lighting

Picture the scene. Its early evening and the shadows have lengthened. The backyard is prepared for the event of the evening. Tables are set with plates of food, the furniture arranged for conversation. The clumps of River Birch are lit from below, glowing in the distance. Around the patio, splashes of light reveal splashes of colored annuals in the darkened backyard, lighting the way for guests. As the breeze blows, patterns of tree branches dance on the ground, setting the stage for a moonlight walk around the property. The lush green foliage of the day time landscape is draped in the ultimate evening dress of yellow-gold, without which, its enjoyment would end at sunset.

The average home in Chicago land has minimal outside lighting best established for safety needs. While safety is always a concern, whether it's for vehicular and pedestrian traffic, or to discourage curious visitors, it can be accomplished with a more subtle lighting system that doesn't seek to blind or dominate. There will always be code requirements such as coach lights for framing the garage door and front door lights that need to be high voltage. The possibilities of lighting the rest of the property are infinite from there.

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The first objective of landscape lighting is to outline the house that is being swallowed by the darkness. Up lights or down lights should brighten dark corners, outline the front door, and highlight unique architectural features. From the street, looking to the front of the home, the lighting furthest away should be brightest. Plants or features highlighted in the foreground of the property should either have a softer light source or less wattage in order not to overpower the background. Layering the lighting creates depth to the property that would otherwise look flat.

The features of the plant materials and focal features are the next concern. Low voltage up lights on the peeling bark of a tree adds texture to the night landscape or adding a wash of illumination on a well placed water feature allows that piece to stay visible to the homeowners long after the sun has recessed. Techniques with low voltage lighting can highlight features that are hidden during the day when there is more going on in the landscape. The lighting can create a different landscape all together, than the one viewed out the windows during daylight. It is very important not to make cut backs on the number of fixtures needed to create a subtle wash of color. Most trees need a minimum of two lights because it too difficult to achieve a wash of color. With one light, awkward spots of darkness will be present on the tree. This either enhances or depicts the beauty of the landscape element being highlighted. A more subtle look is best achieved with either lower wattage bulbs, or making

changes to the lamp inside the fixture with filters or shifting placement.

The rule of path lights is to use the least amount necessary to do the job right. The “runway look” is a common problem with low voltage path lights. This is when the lights are placed on both sides of walkways, closely spaced. This look is quite cluttered, and too heavy. Also, most walkways have some lawn next to them and placing the fixtures in the lawn is a maintenance hazard. The path lights should light the way, but each pool of light used should highlight important areas. With so much going on, the lighting will begin to compete with each other and the eye will not move from one area to the next. Use path lights to illuminate the start in a walkway, curves, dark areas, or steps. They should be in balance, not irregularly spaced. To break up a long walk, add moonlighting from an above tree or shed some light on a planter that is along the walk, thus not using the exact same fixtures and adding visual interest. There is a great deal of versatility created by low voltage lighting and the desired look can be achieved using different applications to the same fixtures.

The technical side of low voltage lighting is exactly that, it takes far less energy than high voltage. It also takes a minimum amount of disturbance to add after the home and landscape already have been added. A quality fixture has no comparison, as it will stand up to the elements, and usually offers a guarantee of ten or more years. They are designed to be subtle because they are meant to create the effect without being seen. Some advances in LED lamps are offering

even longer light bulb life, with even less wattage needed. The challenge right now is to achieve the same light quality, as LED lamps often do not have a warm glow. We are confident the options will be available soon.

The maintenance on these lighting systems is minimal. The bulbs are available at either local hardware stores or landscape suppliers. Once a client has invested in a lighting system, Evergreen offers maintenance packages which run seasonally. The fixtures will be adjusted as needed, glass cleaned, and bulbs replaced. Also, the timers in the systems will be reset to accommodate daylight savings. Participants in this program will have the benefits of trouble shooting any problems with the system during the season at no extra charge above the package. If you are interested in seeing the lighting possibilities of your property we also offer demonstrations to show some of the options that can be done.

Low voltage lighting systems create an effect that can change the feel of the nightscape of your property. Low voltage lighting fixtures add a richness that is missing once the sun disappears and allows the property to dress up for the evening, especially in Chicago land where long winters often leave homeowners leaving for work in the dark and coming home in the dark. A home and surrounding landscape provides a sanctuary for relaxation, and showcases the property. Well designed landscape lights provides another way to set the stage for the mood desired when you walk in the door, when you grill in the backyard, or when you invite a few guests.