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Aging Landscape Needs Facelift

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GARDEN NOTES

AGING LANDSCAPE NEEDS FACELIFT

By Dennis Hinkamp

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Just like most of us tend to outgrow the boundaries of our high school clothes, landscaping also tends to outgrow its petite younger years.

Some plants grow larger than expected, others die, and 10 years later, it may be as unrecognizable as your graduation picture. A make over or “re-landscaping” may be in order, says Jerry Goodspeed Utah State University Extension horticulturist.

Too often we assume that trees, shrubs and perennials will live forever. It is a false notion that once they are planted and established, we can leave them alone, Goodspeed says.

“Usually during the first five years of a landscape’s life, plants grow and fill in their designated area,” he says. “From years 5 to 10, it looks great. From 10 years on, though, many plants start to outgrow their area and begin to look cluttered, overgrown and messy.”

Eventually parts of your landscape will need to be replaced, Goodspeed says. The most common problem with older landscapes is crowding. When the plants were first brought home in gallon containers they looked so small next to the house. So, in many cases, the plants were placed too close together to make the landscape look full quickly. As the years pass, however, they have grown and matured. Eventually, they crowd each other, the house, the lawn, and start infringing on the local forest.

“The advantage in re-landscaping is that the whole landscape usually does not need to be replaced. Sometimes the landscape isn’t crowded, it just needs some fine tuning. Plants may have died, trees have turned sunny areas into deep shade,” Goodspeed says.

Start by identifying the plants that have reached a desirable size, or are just starting to mature and look acceptable, he suggests. These plants can become the focal point of the landscape, and the large, overgrown plants can slowly be removed.

From there, develop a plan that slowly weeds out the older, unsightly plants and replace them with new ones. It may take anywhere from 1 to 5 years to renew the landscape and gradually eliminate the older plants, he says.

“Some of the new varieties now available at nurseries may be more attractive in the landscape or need less maintenance and care,” Goodspeed says. “This is a good time of year to

visit the local nurseries and ask a certified nurseryman about options and new plants that may be available in the spring.

“Fall is a good time to develop landscaping ideas and put them on paper to form a landscape master plan. Gather ideas from gardening magazines, catalogues and books. Then decide which plants are worth keeping and which need to be removed in the coming years.”

Also, consider applying a winterizing fertilizer on lawns, Goodspeed adds. Snow and rain help move the nutrients into the soil while the roots are still active enough to absorb and store them until spring. This should insure green grass early in the spring, and probably eliminate the need to fertilize again until May.

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