

Landscaping: Exterior Design Revamp Time

By Dennis Hinkamp

Why buy new furniture when all that is needed is to rearrange it? We often redecorate the insides of our homes to avoid boredom, why not our yards.

“It is a little harder to rearrange the landscape than a room,” says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. “Trees do not move easily and some shrubs also have a problem with relocating. About the only plants that seem capable of moving are perennials. And, even some of them tend to die if they don't have all their fussy needs met.”

So, what can you do when the landscape becomes tiresome and it's time to revamp?

A landscape should be ever-changing and improving, Goodspeed says. This creates interest and adds variety. This does not mean ripping out half the landscape every couple of years, but it does suggest that new plants can be added and some removed when the landscape becomes overgrown and lackluster. The first step in rearranging the landscape is to take inventory of the plants and shrubs that you truly value and enjoy. Next, determine which plants to remove.

Normally, trees and some shrubs are a permanent part of the landscape, he says. The plants that surround these, however, can be changed. Small changes of shape, color and size can alter the look and appearance of most landscapes.

After determining which part of the yard needs a change, drive around the area looking for plants you like, which are attractive and can be used in your landscape to add interest and variety, Goodspeed suggests. Ask the homeowner the names of the plants. If they do not know, take a small sample to your favorite nursery or garden center for identification. Interest and emphasis can be created in the landscape by simply changing two or three plants.

“An example of changing textures in a landscape would be to replace three junipers bordering the front yard with a small planting of spirea or Euonymus.” he says. “The new plants would break up the juniper shape and throw in some color. Or, the arborvitae that guards the front door could be replaced with a Japanese maple or a small weeping shrub. Both of these examples also alter the color, shape and size.”

Placement of plants, like furniture, also helps add diversity to the view, Goodspeed says. Instead of planting in rows, plant in groups. Remove one or three plants from an existing foundation planting and replace with flowering shrubs in a group away from the others. Place them so they come out into the yard a few feet. This not only adds variety, but gives the landscape some depth.

Adding color to the landscape is one of the easier elements to change, he says. When buying flowering shrubs and perennials, find out when they bloom.

“Too many yards have all the plants blooming at the same time,” Goodspeed says. “Such a landscape looks fantastic for three weeks in the spring, then lacks color the rest of the year. Find shrubs and perennials that bloom at a variety of times throughout the growing season.”

One or two bold shapes in the yard also helps when it comes to rearranging a landscape, he says. Weeping shrubs are great attention getters. Columnar plants are also a good focal point when surrounded by groups of smaller shrubs. Don't be afraid to remove a shrub or two, bring in a newer, better plant to freshen up the yard and improve how you feel about your landscape.

For more information, contact your local [USU County Extension office](#).

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