

Landscaping the Front Lawn Area



**A Supplement To The 4-H
Environmental Beautification Project,
Unit III**

Landscaping the Front Lawn Area

Introduction

Few things give the homeowner more pride than a well-landscaped yard. Communities, as well as individuals, can be proud of well-kept home grounds. However, beautifully landscaped homes don't occur by chance. Landscape designers carefully plan on paper before they start any planting. You should plan every detail of the house and yard before you plant or make any changes.

In landscaping your home you will be concerned with three basic factors: (1) neatness, (2) function, and (3) beauty.

Neatness

A neat property with only a beautiful lawn and some correctly placed trees is more attractive than untidy property overplanted with shrubs and trees.

Function

A functional landscape design will serve the family needs. You can best develop your landscape by finding out what each family member wants in the plan. Hold a family conference and jot down everyone's likes and dislikes for the grounds.

Beauty

A functional design will indicate the bare essentials. You arrange these parts to fulfill the family's basic needs in the garden. Then, by wise use of shrubs, hedges, trees, flowers, ground covers, walks, benches, and other items, you can keep the landscape beautiful and functional.

Points to Consider

1. Make a simple plan for landscaping your home. Draw this plan to scale.
2. Complete some phase of the plan in accordance with your family's wishes.
3. Give a demonstration or prepare an exhibit for a 4-H event.
4. Keep an accurate record of your project.

How to Put Your Plan on Paper

It is impossible for you to carry the many parts of a good landscape in your head—so put them on paper. This means drawing a scale model of your property as it is now. From this you can plan your improvements and note these changes on the plan as you go along.

Materials You Need

1. Tape measure (or a 6- or 10-foot ruler).
2. Sharp pointed instrument such as a screwdriver or nail to hold tape when you are measuring.
3. Tracing paper (preferably cross section paper of 10 squares to the inch).
4. Drawing pencil (2H or 3H).
5. Eraser.
6. Drawing compass. (See Figure 1.)

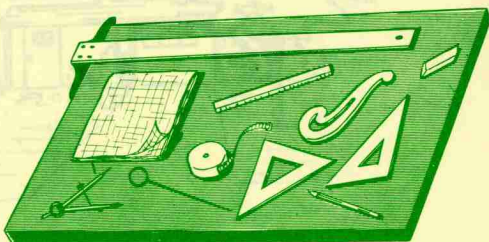


Figure 1

Draw the Plot Plan

For a workable landscape plan, make an accurate plot of your property. A convenient scale is 1 inch to 10 feet. Show on the plan the scale you are using. Indicate on your plan all existing features, as well as grade, drainage, good views, and other items that may influence your final plan.

To plot any point, such as a house corner or a tree, measure its distance from two known lines (property lines in your case). The measurements

are taken at right angles to one another. For example, if the house is parallel to the property lines, measure the distance from one corner to a side property line and also to the front sidewalk or property line. (See Figure 2.) Each line must be at right angles (90° to the property line).

If your house is an odd angle to property lines, then you locate points in a slightly different manner. (See Figure 3.)

If you have no straight sidewalk or street curb to work from, then you must draw a string along at least one property line and use it as a starting point. Start your measurements from this line to two corners of the house. Be sure your tapeline forms a right angle with the property line. By connecting the two points on your paper, you will establish that side of the house in its relationship to the property line. From there on measure the remaining sides of the house and plot them. All corners (with rare exceptions) are 90° angles.

Show the exact location of windows, doors, steps, and other important features of your house in the plan.

You also should indicate on the plan how high above the ground each window is and the number of steps leading into the house. This lets you know how tall you may want certain plants to grow in these particular locations.

To locate other objects, work from lines that run

parallel to the sides of the house.

When plotting an existing tree, locate the drip line (the spread of its branching system). This is often not a perfect circle.

If the overhang of your roof is more than 24 inches, show it on your plan as a dotted line. Place sun-loving plants beyond this line or they may suffer from lack of sunlight.

Include on your plan an arrow showing the direction North. You may approximate its direction, but a magnetic compass will give you the exact location. The arrow tells you at a glance where areas of shade will be. Some plants do better in shade than others.

When your property is plotted on paper you will be ready to start a most pleasant and rewarding job—that of designing your own landscape plan. Even if you know you cannot carry out all your plans now, design the entire property anyway. (See *Landscaping Home Grounds Service and Private Areas*, 4H M-16-11, for additional information.)

Once the rough plan is complete to the relative satisfaction of everyone involved, trace the entire plan on a clean sheet of paper. It can then be filed away to be used when time or money or both are available to do at least a portion of it. A complete plan will help you spend every minute and every penny wisely as you landscape your home.

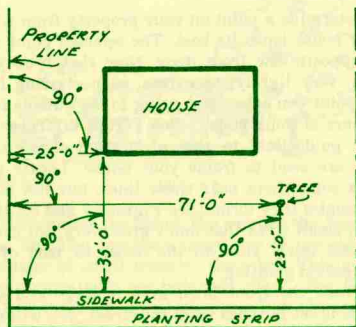


Figure 2

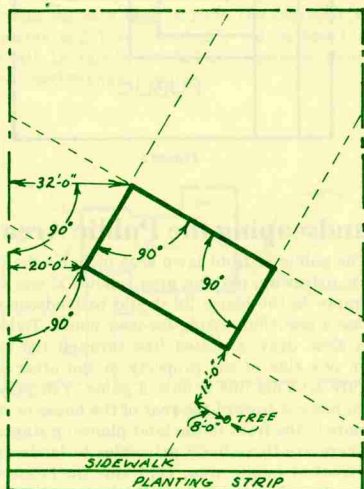


Figure 3

Three Outdoor "Rooms"

A completely landscaped home property is nothing more than extension of the house to the outdoors. What you really try to do is to add three distinct outside "rooms" to your home. These three areas are commonly called the public or front lawn area, the service area, and private area. (See Figure 4.) Just as each room in the house serves a purpose, each area of the home grounds has a specific use. This publication discusses the front lawn area.

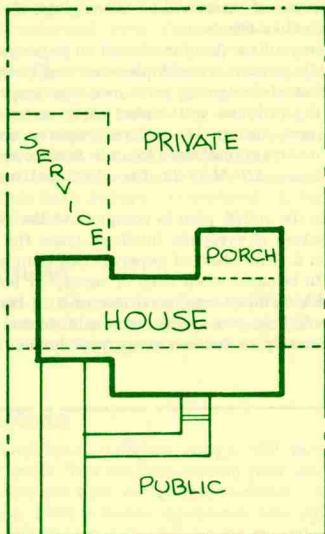


Figure 4

Landscaping the Public Area

The public or front lawn area includes the front lawn, driveway, parking area, sidewalk, and front entrance to the house. It should be landscaped to create a beautiful setting for your house. To locate this area, draw a dotted line through the house from one side of the property to the other. (See Figure 4.) This line is only a guide. You may see fit to move it toward the rear of the house or move it more to the front in the later planning stages.

There are three basic principles to landscaping the front or public area: (1) frame the house with trees, (2) soften the lines of the house with plants properly selected and placed, and (3) maintain an open lawn area.

Let the Oval Help

Superimpose an oval on the public area, without letting it touch the property line or the house. (An oval is shaped much like a hen egg when viewed lengthwise.) The oval in Figure 5 shows where the major spread of grass will be. Put the plantings outside the oval.

Do not extend plantings or fence down both sides of the property all the way to the sidewalk or the street, especially if you live in a residential section where one property joins the next. Such barriers look unfriendly. They reduce air movement, which is most important in summer. Furthermore, the barriers tend to block the view of the home. Plantings at the sides of the house draw attention toward the house and then toward the front door. If the plantings are kept outside the oval, they will serve this purpose.

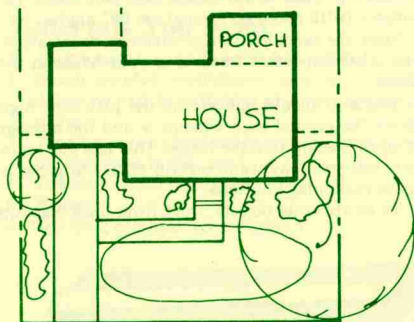


Figure 5

Frame With Trees

Determine a point on your property from which your house looks its best. The selected point may be opposite the front door. Now sketch on your plan, very lightly, two lines, each starting from the point you select and going to the outside front corners of your house. (See Figure 6.) These are your guide lines to general location of any trees that are used to frame your house. Locate your trees somewhere near these lines, but not inside the angles they form. (See Figures 7 and 8.) However, small trees that don't grow very tall can be planted fairly close to the house as part of the foundation planting.

Where the front lawn area is large and your house is set far back from the street, you will need more than two trees to frame the house. Several trees are most often needed in rural areas. (See Figure 9.)

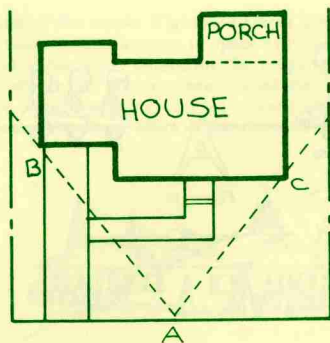


Figure 6

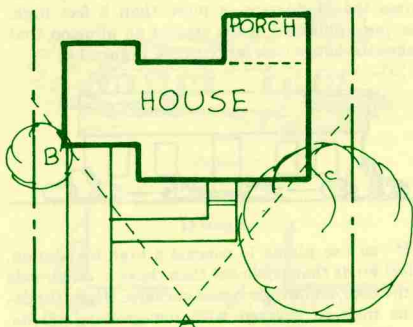


Figure 7



Figure 8

The smaller the house, the smaller the trees you may use. You can use a large tree on one side and a cluster of small trees on the other. This gives a very naturalistic but balanced effect. (See Figure 10.) (Remember when you played on the seesaw? One heavy child could balance two or more smaller children if their weight equalled his. See Figure 11.)

With your compass, draw circles showing the approximate size of the plants at maturity. Draw these to the same scale you used for the plot plan.

The following are among the best of many trees that can grow in North Carolina. For more detail on desirable trees consult your county Extension agent.

Large Deciduous Trees

Willow Oak
White Oak
Red Oak
Sugar Maple
Red Maple
Black Gum
Ash
Pecan
Pin Oak

Evergreen Trees

Southern Magnolia
Cherry Laurel
Cedrus Deodora
Native Cedar
American Holly
Hemlock
White Pine
Spruce
Live Oak

Small Deciduous Trees

White or Pink Flowering Dogwood
Crabapple
Magnolia
Japanese Flowering Cherry
Flowering Plum
Red Bud
Sourwood
Washington Hawthorn
Crapemyrtle

Trees and shrubs purchased from a commercial nursery are well shaped and apt to grow. If you use plants from your own property or from that of a friend, be sure that you get the correct species of plants and transplant only plants less than 6 feet tall. Do this in late fall and winter so they will have a better chance to live.

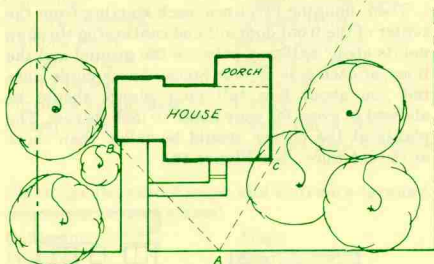


Figure 9

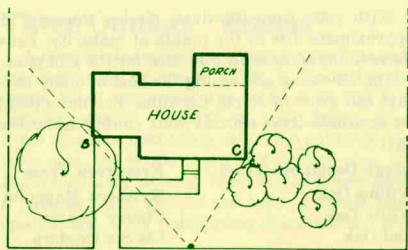


Figure 10

Foundation Planting

All houses need shrubs planted around the foundation. Most people are tempted to overplant. This is true of both the number and varieties of shrubs. Keep things simple and think of how your shrubs will look in 4 to 5 years. It is better to have a thin planting for a few years than it is to have a dense tangled mass of shrubs that have to be replanted every 5 to 10 years.

The strong vertical lines in the house form sharp angles where they meet the ground. Locate the key plants around these angles. (See Figure 12.)

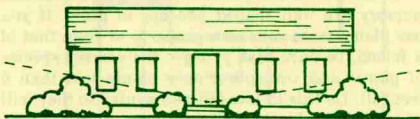


Figure 12

Then, imagine two lines, each starting from the center of the front door sill and continuing through points about half-way between the ground and the lines, at each side of your house. These guide lines tell you about how tall your plants should be allowed to grow for your house to look its best. The plants at the corner should be taller than those at the entrance. (See Figure 13.)

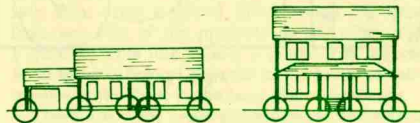


Figure 13

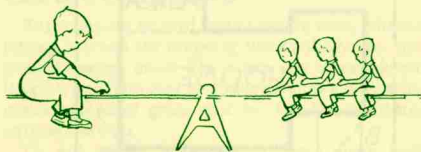


Figure 11

Do not cover the base of the house with plants, unless the foundation is more than 3 feet high. Leaving unplanted space creates an illusion that makes the house look larger. (See Figure 14.)

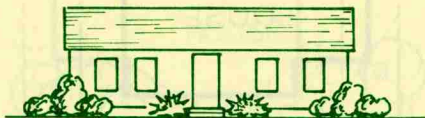


Figure 14

If you use plants to conceal a high foundation, select kinds that are lower than those at either side of the door and at the house corners. High foundations may be covered with low-growing plants. (See Figure 15.)

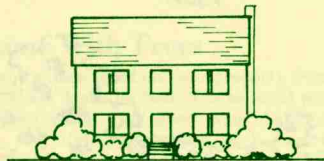


Figure 15

Landscaping a ranch-style house with sharp-pointed plants gives an impression of "busyness." It is not restful. (See Figure 16.)

Figure 17 shows the same house landscaped with more or less rounded plants, presenting a harmonious picture. Avoid too many sharp-pointed plants. Modern homes usually look better with more rounded forms of plants. Sharp-pointed plants give an undesirable sense of activity, or busyness.

Use corner plantings that extend beyond the

sides of the house. Figure 18 shows some typical groupings. The amount of space available and the size of the house determine the proper size of the corner group. Where space is available, try to use the long, sweeping, curved corner planting. It gives the general effect of the sweep of an oval.

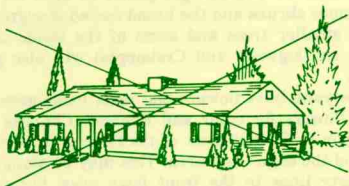


Figure 16



Figure 17

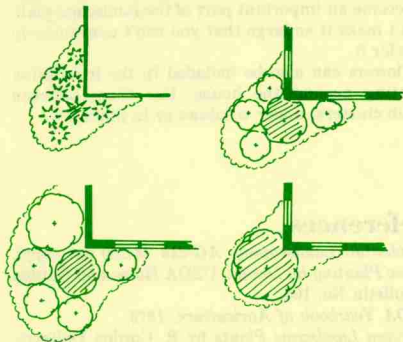
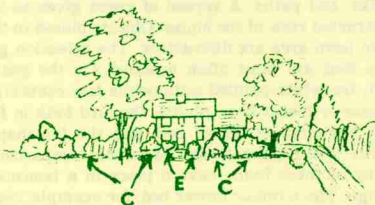


Figure 18

Try to keep the foliage texture pretty much the same in any grouping. If the key plant in the group has needled foliage, then the supporting plants should have needles, too. If the key plant has broad leaves, such as aucuba, then use broad-leaved supporting plants. These include photinia, nandina, and mahonia. Try not to mix evergreens in the same group with deciduous plants, which lose their foliage each winter and grow new foliage in the following spring. (See Figure 19.)

Use the list below to help you select the proper plants. If you are not sure that the plants are hardy in your area, check with your agricultural extension agent, 4-H leader, or local nurseryman.



The letter E shows where you use entrance plantings. The letter C indicates corner and border plantings.

Figure 19

Entrance Plantings

Dwarf Chinese Holly	Stokes Japanese Holly
Littleleaf Japanese Holly	Kurumi Azalea
Convexleaf Japanese Holly	Nandina
Dwarf Abelia	Dwarf Aucuba
Andorra Juniper	Shore Juniper
Japanese Littleleaf Boxwood	Oregon-Grape
Tom Thumb Arborvitae	

Corner Plantings (also border plantings along property lines)

Glossy Abelia	Japanese Aucuba
Gold Dust Aucuba	Wintergreen Barberry
Common Boxwood	Japanese Box
Camellia	Camellia Sasanqua
Cleyera Japonica	Chinese Holly
Burford Holly	Showy Jasmine
Pfitzer Juniper	Sargent Chinese Juniper
Irish Juniper	Glossy Privet
Fortunes Osmanthus	Sweet Osmanthus
Pittosporum	Carolina Rhododendron

Plantings Between Corner and Entrance (ground covers, use several plants)

Goldentuft	Ajuga
Ponyfoot	English Ivy
Wintercreeper Euonymus	Creeping Juniperus
Evergreen Candytuft	Patridgeberry
Liriope	Japanese Pachysandra
Dwarf Lilytuft	Santolina
Moss Pink	Germander
Common Periwinkle	

Keep an Open Lawn Area

The only things that should cut into the spread of grass in the front of your home, in addition to trees, are necessary utilities, such as driveways, walks, and paths. A spread of green gives an unobstructed view of the house. Objects placed in this open lawn area are distracting. The attention getters that are most often misused are the gazing ball, the white painted automobile tire containing cannas or castor bean plants, the bird bath in full sun, the circular flower bed, and the fan-shaped trellis. (See Figures 20 and 21 for this comparison.) Many of these items have a place in a landscape design. The circular flower bed, for example, could be in the center of a focal point for the private garden area. The gazing ball is properly used as a central feature in a formal garden known as the radial type.



Figure 20



Figure 21

Flowers

Now you have covered the three basic principles of good landscape design for the public or front lawn area of your property. You will notice that there are no annual or perennial flowers suggested for this area. You can get plenty of color on the deciduous shrubs and the broad leaved evergreens. Your smaller trees and some of the shade trees (such as Dogwood and Crabapple) will also give color.

Everyone likes flowers and most home grounds need flowers for color and interest. Chances are that you will plant most of the flowers in borders around the edge of an area. This may be along the property lines in the front lawn area, but most border plantings should be in the outdoor living area. Regardless of where you plant them, the flower borders must look and grow well.

Your flower border will look best if it has a good background. This may be a well designed fence, a shrub border or a wall. It is also important that the border have a definite beginning and end. For instance, plant a clump of shrubs at each end of the border. Use low shrubs at the end from which the border is usually seen.

The border should be from 5 to 7 feet wide to give depth to the flower planting, and long enough to become an important part of the landscape plan. Don't make it so large that you can't conveniently care for it.

Flowers can also be included in the foundation planting around the house. Use them between shrub clusters, under windows or in planters.

References

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