

Time to Consider Relandscaping?

by Reeve Hobbie

Hopefully when you read the word “relandscape” you don’t shy away from it. I’m going to provide you with some tips on this subject that may make the idea of relandscaping a whole lot easier. My hope is that I can at least get you thinking about whether you need to relandscape your home or not.

In the next few paragraphs I will cover the what, when, why and how of relandscaping. If you wish to tackle it, I’ll treat the project as if you will be doing it yourself or directing others to do it for you.

Evaluation

Let me start with this simple suggestion. In the cool of the day, step across the street and look at the front of your home as if you were a potential home buyer. Does your front yard landscape, as it appears at this moment, enhance the beauty of your home or does it detract from it? Is there a visual invitation to make you want to walk up to your front door? Can you see your front windows? Or are plants overgrown, deep in shade, spindly or even dead? What would it take to create great curb appeal for your home?

Considerations

If you agree that you need to do something, where do you begin? Start by determining if any plants may be retained if properly trimmed back and reshaped. Rejuvenation or renewal pruning, two different trimming techniques you can read about online, works well on some shrubs, but not all. For each shrub and tree you wish to keep, you’ll need to know whether pruning will be successful and the best time to do it. Definitely no summer pruning of shrubs. That’s usually a late winter project.

Planning

Do you want to maintain the same footprint for your front garden beds? If not, it would be best to either contact a professional landscape designer or develop a new plan yourself. There are plenty of landscape design guides and “how to” books out there to consult. Do realize that if you plan to make major changes to your landscape, i.e., changing to xeriscape, modifying garden beds, adding a hardscape structure (deck, gazebo, playscape, retaining walls) or other feature, you will need to submit your proposed plans to BVSHOA’s architectural control

committee chair Jacque Forrest acc.bvshoa@gmail.com for that committee's review and approval.

So work up a plan – what needs to be pruned, what needs to be removed, what kinds of trees and plants would make suitable replacements. Consider the amount of sun and shade you receive, water needs, deer visitations, evergreen and/or deciduous plants, and the potential size, shape, color and texture of plants. (A very good resource, free at most local nurseries, is a guide entitled *Native & Adapted Landscape Plants for Central Texas*.)

Execution

Fall is the best time of the year to remove old plantings and prepare soil and beds for the new installations. Specifically add soil amendments like rich compost or manure and peat moss. Work all new materials into your existing soil and let it rest. If you wish to avoid a lot of future weeding in your rejuvenated beds, put down a quality landscape cloth and anchor it well.

Then during the three cool months of November, December and January will be the right time to plant new shrubs and trees. First, position your new plants on top of your bed where you intend to install them. Allow enough room for them to grow and be sure they are not too close to your house foundation. Step back and take a look. If it looks right, cut "Xs" in your landscape cloth beneath the potted plants and then dig holes for each at least twice as wide as the pot, but no deeper than the pot. Plant the plants.

Water everything in really well and cover soil or landscape cloth with 3 to 4 inches of your choice of mulch. Continue to water new plantings frequently, but especially before a potential freeze. Monitor them carefully into spring and summer. The first year will be the toughest on the new landscape.

Perhaps I have over simplified front yard relandscaping, but I wanted to make you aware of how you can improve the value of your home and the neighborhood. I also want you to realize that springtime is too late to start. Fall and winter are the right times to carry out landscaping projects in Austin.

If you have questions about your yard or garden, please call Travis County Master Gardeners at 512-854-9600. The person at the other end of the line may not have an immediate answer, but they'll research it for you and will get back with you.