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Landscaping: How to Do-It-Yourself

Topics Covered:

Do-it-Yourself: Laying Sod

Do It Yourself: Drip Irrigation System

Do-it-Yourself: Planting Trees

Do-it-Yourself: An Attractive Rock Garden

Easy Front Yard Landscaping

Front Yard Landscaping

Herb and Vegetable Gardens

Lawn Lingo: Ten Basic Facts You Should Know

Preparing to Build Wooden Fences in the Landscape

Starting from Scratch: How to Prepare the Ground and Plant Your Perfect Lawn

Tips for Planning Your Landscape

Landscaping Kits to Build Your Own Pond

What Kind of Landscaping Equipment Do You Need to Have Around the House?

Common Landscaping Tools

More Landscaping Tools

Do You Know How to Choose the Right Landscaping Supply Store?

Landscaping: How to Do-It Yourself

Do-it-Yourself: Laying Sod

For many landscapers, the instant gratification felt in having an instant lawn is not to be competed with. After all, when one seeds a lawn, it can take quite a while to grow. But laying sod is an excellent way to get an instantly grassy and lush yard. It is more than possible to lay sod yourself. It is not very difficult to do, although it does require planning and some hard work. But, if you plan wisely and work well, you should be able to save a great deal of money over having someone else lay the sod for you.

The very first thing to do is to prepare the dirt area for the sod. You should, of course, already have the sod on order to be delivered or picked up, so that you can lay it as soon as the ground is prepared (but do not have it delivered or go pick it up before preparations are complete; it will rot if it sits in the sun for too long before you begin laying it).

Prepare your yard by performing any necessary soil enhancements to bring the pH in line with what the sod needs. The soil should already be tilled, and you should do a final rake or drag of the area to ensure that it is level and that all larger pebbles, rocks, and sticks are removed from the area. Moisten the soil, but do not make it muddy and soggy. If you plan to have an irrigation or sprinkler system, make sure that it is in place before you lay your sod.

Sod comes either in rolls or in rectangles or squares. In any case, it is a good idea to begin by laying the sod against a straight line. A sidewalk, driveway, or flowerbed against the side of the house makes an excellent guide. As you unroll each new length of sod, or fit in each piece, press the edges together.

Do not overlap them, but do try to manually "knit" them together so that there are no visible spaces between pieces of sod. You should stagger the locations of joints so that there is not a line of sod pieces showing the length of the yard. Staggering will give the sodded lawn an appearance of being more naturally grown.

Having an inexpensive carpet knife available will help you as you lay your sod around more oddly shaped or rounded areas. Even though you start along a straight edge, few yards are completely uniform in their shape. You can cut pieces of sod to fit around fixtures, trees, and sprinkler heads. You should work from one end of the yard to another, but in such a manner as to avoid walking on laid sod until after it can be rolled.

After the sod is down, you should use a lawn roller to go over your sod. These can be rented at reasonable rates. The roller is specially designed to help sodded lawns take better root. It forces the roots in the sod to make positive contact with the soil below, encouraging better knitting. You should water your new lawn every day for the first week (except, of course, on rainy days) and more than every day if the weather is especially hot.

After the first week, gradually begin stretching out times between watering, as this encourages the roots to grow downward, seeking moisture deeper in the soil. Be sure to water deeply, however. Fertilizer can be applied at intervals throughout the season, and you should begin a regular mowing schedule three to four weeks after first laying the sod.

If you take good care of your new lawn, it should flourish, and you will achieve faster results than seeding the lawn and waiting for it to grow. Additionally, if you take care to conscientiously prepare your soil and carefully lay your sod, then there is no reason that you cannot enjoy some of the best lawn in your neighborhood. But be sure to properly care for the sod after it is laid to ensure that the roots firmly house themselves in your soil, and to prevent the sun from drying out and killing your brand new lawn.

Do It Yourself: Drip Irrigation System

Installing an irrigation system in your yard can help make maintenance easier. After all, you will not have to hand set sprinklers all day and try to remember where you have already watered. A sprinkler system, however, is not a project for the average do-it-yourselfer. This is because there are multiple precise calculations that need to be made, and a great deal of special handling necessary to properly set up the sprinklers. A drip irrigation system, on the other hand, can be set up fairly easily by most do-it-yourselfers and conserves water to boot.

A drip irrigation system consists of a series of tubes. These tubes have holes placed in them at specific intervals, corresponding with the placement of your plants. Most of the time, these systems are placed under the soil, providing deep and efficient watering for the plants. These systems promote water conservation, as there is very little evaporation, the space between plants is not needlessly watered, and there is no wind to carry the water away before it reaches the roots.

Plus, watering deeply means that you do not need to water your plants as often. While drip irrigation may not be especially helpful for lawns, it can be utilized to water some portions of the lawn. Root health is promoted by drip irrigation systems, and this means hardier plants that are more resistant to pests, drought, and disease.

Because they require the opening of holes along their length, drip irrigation systems are most often installed around flowers and shrubs, and even trees. This targeted approach to watering is more effective and more efficient than more traditional sprinkler irrigation. Additionally, it helps ensure that each of the landscape's individual elements are properly watered and cared for. A drip irrigation system is unobtrusive and can be easily concealed so that the unsightly tubes do not mar the look of your property.

Installing drip irrigation is relatively simple. It is possible to create the system yourself, using hoses and making use of water available to your home, but it is much easier to use kits. There are kits available at most home improvement stores and warehouses that can help you better install a drip system. Most of the time, this installation only takes one day (or even less!). The kits come with easy to read instructions that clearly explain all of the necessary steps. There are some tools needed for the installation of your drip irrigation system, but they are generally tools

that are commonly found in most households.

Not only can you install a drip irrigation system, but you can also make plant maintenance even easier by adding a timer to your system. We know that timers can be used with more traditional sprinkler systems, but many people are surprised that a timer can be used with a drip system. The timers are also available at home improvement stores and can be easily installed to go with your irrigation systems.

Timers help you feel peace of mind knowing that you will not need to try to remember to water your plants. Additionally, they ensure that your plants will get the right amount of water at the right time. This can be valuable in helping you save time and money in costs associated with water usage.

It is good to note that drip irrigation systems can be used in conjunction with "irrigation zones" in your landscape. Plants that have similar water needs should be planted in the same area so that they can be more efficiently targeted by watering. You can help clearly demarcate irrigation zones by establishing separate beds for plants that need certain amounts of water. Your plants will also be healthier, since you will not be over watering or under watering some plants because of the water needs of its neighbors.

Also be sure to note that areas that face south need more watering than areas located in areas with northern exposure. When installing a drip irrigation system, you need to keep these things in mind to ensure that your plants are best cared for by your targeted plan. Drip irrigation is one of the best ways to make efficient use of your water resources, and when combined with the concept of irrigation zones can be even more efficient.

Do-it-Yourself: Planting Trees

Trees are a beautiful and desirable part of almost any landscape. They provide comfortable shade, protect against soil erosion, and can even contribute to the energy efficiency of a home. Additionally, trees are beautiful and can make any landscape attractive. Any home with a nice, attractive, well-maintained tree on its property enjoys increased property value. But in order to enjoy a tree, it must first be properly planted.

There are three main ways that plantings can be bought; subsequently, there are different ways to plant them. You may plant a bare root tree, a container tree, or a ball and burlap tree. Each of these types of seedling set-ups requires a different technique in planting. However, it is very possible to do this planting yourself, saving money and keeping within a reasonable budget.

Planting a bare root tree. This is a tree moved from one location to another (dug up and transplanted).

The first thing you should do is make sure you have the proper tools: a garden fork, a shovel, two wooden stakes, tree ties, and mulch. Use a shovel to mark out the area of the planned hole. This hole should be at least twice the diameter of the tree's root system. Once you have

the area marked out, with a shallow hole already dug within the markings, use the garden fork to scarify the edges of the hole. This action loosens the soil and will make it easier for the roots to properly expand.

In the center of your hole, build a small mound. Then place the two stakes into the ground on opposite sides of the mound. The stakes act as stabilizers and supports to the tree as it works to establish itself. You should try to make sure that you plant the tree at the same depth at which it was planted before. Spread the roots over the mound. Next, add enough soil to support the tree (but not fill up the hole) and then spray the area with water. Backfill the hole with a little more soil, add water again. Then repeat two or three more times, completely filling in the hole.

Tamp the soil down to get rid of air pockets surrounding the tree's roots. If your climate is dry, or if water drains away quickly, a moat should be dug around the tree to retain water. Fasten the tree ties to the stakes and the tree, not too tightly, to ensure that the tree receives adequate support for its first year in the new area. Two to four inches of mulch should be applied around the planting area, but be sure that the mulch does not touch the tree trunk. The tree should be watered well and the soil kept moist for the next year.

Planting a container tree. This type of tree is often found at nurseries, coming in a pot or other plastic container.

Like with a bare root tree, it is necessary to have a shovel, garden fork, stakes, tree ties, and mulch. Then, using the container as a guide, mark out the planting using the shovel. The hole will need to be right around three times the width of the container. The hole should be about one and a half times as deep as the height of the pot. After the hole has been properly dug, use the garden fork to scarify the hole's sides.

Pound the two stakes (preferably cedar) into the ground angled outward. There should be enough room between the stakes for the root ball to fit. Water the tree in its container, and then gently lay it on its side. Remove the pot and gently tease the roots out with your hands. A small cultivator would also work. Backfill some of the soil into the hole.

Place the tree in the center of the hole. Make sure that the edge of the hole is level with the height of the container. It may be necessary to add soil until this level is achieved. After the tree is at the correct height, fill in the hole with soil, tamping it down as you go. Dig a moat if needed. Use your tree ties and apply mulch in much the same manner as the bare root tree. The tree will need to be kept moist for a year while it establishes itself.

Planting a ball and burlap tree (root ball surrounded by burlap sack).

This planting technique requires only a shovel, garden fork, mulch and scissors (or a knife). Dig a hole, much like with the container tree, of three times the root ball's width. The hole should only be as deep as ball, however. Scarify the hole's sides. Place the tree in the hole and use the scissors to remove twine or wire from the ball. Remove the burlap altogether if it is synthetic. If it is natural, loosen the top layer and roll it down to the base of the ball. Fill in the hole and mulch, caring for it as other newly planted trees.

Do-it-Yourself: An Attractive Rock Garden

One of the most economical ways to enhance the landscape surrounding your home is to build a rock garden. Rock gardens are most often associated with the British Isles, where the climate is rarely accommodating to delicate plants. Rock gardens bring with them the assumption of having very few plants, and those of a very hardy variety, or no plants at all.

The arrangement of the rocks in your garden, when properly complemented by attractive plants with coordinating colors, can add to the beauty of the home and provide a low-maintenance landscape feature that should not interfere with your lawn-mowing practices; rather, it will reduce the amount of space that requires mowing.

The first thing to do when starting your rock garden is to carefully look over the proposed site for your garden. You should clear the area of unwanted plants, such as spindly grass varieties and diseased trees and plants. Be sure to dig out the roots as well as the tops, or you may find your rock garden invaded at some later time by an unwanted fern or intrusive perennials.

If you plan to do some planting, make sure you test the soil to determine its level of acidity and its general pH. It is a good idea, even after you have placed your rocks and mapped out where you want to put any plants, to wait a full growing season before you attempt to plant in your rock garden.

This will ensure that the soil has settled, and it will give you a chance to make sure that you have got rid of any pesky weeds by hoeing them out, root and all, as soon as they make their appearances above the ground. It is also desirable to mix in such soil enhancements as mulch, compost, and other compounds. If you plan to use plants that like soils with alkali, you should mix in crushed oyster shells or limestone.

After you have improved the soil, then it is time to place your rocks. It is important for aesthetic purposes not to evenly space your rocks, or to choose rocks of the same size and shape. A little variety in the types of rocks used is as desirable as a little variety of plants chosen to place in a more conventional garden. If you wish to have a great deal of plants, then your rocks should be spaced further apart to give more room for the vegetation. If, however, you plan to use plants only sparingly, arrange them closer together, but make sure that you allow some room for plants to grow. Try to make the design look as natural as possible, as it will be more attractive.

When placing the rocks in a garden that is sloped, it is best to start at the low parts of slopes and work up. Try to slope the top of the rock back toward the slope so that water from rain and sprinklers is guided downward. Additionally, try to keep outcroppings from overshadowing rocks and plants below. The goal is to create a feeling of stability. Set each rock so that its widest side serves a base. You can also set a larger rock on top of smaller rocks and then fill in the cracks with soil.

If you are placing the rocks on flat ground, work from the inside toward the outer edges of the garden. If you are planning a circular garden, or a rock garden in some other shape that is surrounded by other landscape features, this can be tricky. Therefore, it is a good idea to mark out which rocks you would like on a map so that you can ensure their proper placement in the garden. It may be necessary, on a flat site, to build up small mounds of dirt in different places

to give the rock garden an interesting appearance.

If you plan to use plants in your garden, you should be careful to plant them after everything else is in place, and after you have a chance to make sure the soil is properly settled. Early spring or early autumn are the best times to do any planting, including planting in rock gardens. Make sure you choose plants that are suited for rugged terrain and adapted to your climate. Then, plant them in the spaces you have designated. The end result should be a beautiful garden that requires little upkeep.

Easy Front Yard Landscaping

Having a low maintenance front yard is the goal of many people. You can get easy to manage front yard landscaping done by any of the professional landscapers in your area or you can do it yourself. Either way you can have front yard landscaping done that will take minimal work to keep looking fantastic all year round. If you are going to get a professional in to do your front yard landscaping though, be sure to tell him that this is your over all goal, that you want to have a yard that will not take a lot of work to keep up.

If you have less grass in your front yard landscaping then you will cut out a lot of maintenance time right there. Mowing the lawn can take up a lot of time and energy so keeping the grass to a minimum is a great way to save on work. Talk to the front yard landscaping expert about alternative that you can use to keep your yard look good with little lawn area.

Some people choose to use clover instead of grass. Using a clover lawn in your front yard landscaping is a good idea because it will save you money and time. You will not have to mow it very often at all and a clover lawn is even good for front yard landscaping in area that is prone to droughts. They do well virtually everywhere. And best of all for those who want to get out there and enjoy their front yard landscaping, bugs hate clover.

Watering the yard can be a big hassle as well. That is why many people incorporate automatic irrigation systems into their front yard landscaping designs these days. This can save you tons of time and money. This is one of the easiest ways for you to keep your yard looking healthy and well watered during the hotter months of the year.

No more hooking up the sprinkler or having to drag out the hose. You can get a professional to install one of these systems for your front yard landscaping design quickly and easily or you can get a kit and do it yourself. I would recommend getting in a professional however, unless you have experience with this kind of thing. If you were to cause a leak then you could face some flooding and rotting and neither of these is going to do anything for your front yard landscaping, do you know what I mean?

Front Yard Landscaping

Front yard landscaping is a fun expression of yourself and your home. If you are looking for a

way to say, "welcome to my home" then you may want to start thinking about redesigning your front yard. If you were coming to visit your house, would you want to knock on your front door? If you are not sure about that answer, then you may want to start thinking of ways to spruce up your front yard.

Add some pep to your front yard

Your home is a stranger's first impression of you. To make your home look friendlier, add some flowers to your yard. Flowerbeds are great and simple ways to accent your front yard. Flowers can be used to line a sidewalk or the pathway to your front door. Colorful flowers in beds around your front porch are sure to be a pleasure to any newcomer.

Add some trees to your front yard

Trees and shrubs are a great way to line a porch or front yard property line. Shrubs are a great way to keep things looking neat and well maintained. As long as you give them the proper attention they require. Try not to use trees that loose their leaves on walkways and make them slippery. Consider using fruit or dogwood trees for the front yard. These are beautiful trees that produce sweet calming scents.

Decorating Porches

What you do with the front porch depends on its size. One good way to add comfort to your front porch is to use benches, tables, and accent pieces to create a warm and comfortable look. Plants and greenery is another way to add not only beauty but also, color and depth to any front porch or patio. Climbing vines are an impressive way to accent a porch railing or arch way.

Fix your sidewalk

Your sidewalk or pathway should be well maintained and kept clean of debris. If you have a sidewalk that needs repaired, then make the necessary mends to make it not only safe but also inviting. Sidewalks made of concrete or some sort of decorative stone or rock are best. Add a little creativity to make it a focal point of your yard.

Fountains or ponds

A peaceful addition to any front yard is a pond or small fountain. You do not want something that is too overwhelming. If you are adding in a pond or fountain to your landscape, then add some brick or stone for the border or foundation.

No confusion

Some good advice for your front yard is to keep it simple. You do not want your front yard to look like a jungle or make people feel like they are going through a maze to find your front door. No matter what design you choose for your front yard, as long as you keep it neat and well maintained you will be delighted every time you walk up to your front door.

Herb and Vegetable Gardens

Most people think of landscaping as rocks carefully placed, manicured lawns, and large trees scattered about a property. However, a garden can make a very attractive addition to any landscape. Whether it is an herb garden or whether it is a vegetable garden, these features can be just as beautiful as any other landscape element, and provide added benefits as well. Well maintained vegetable and herb gardens also provide other benefits: they are a source of food and can be a source of very pleasing smells.

An herb garden is one of the most common types of edible landscape. This is because they are very easy to grow, very tolerant of a variety of climates and conditions, and because they grow rapidly. Additionally, herbs are more than just tasty. Many of them look very nice, with attractively shaped leaves and different shades of green that can add a subtle beauty to the landscape. Not only that, but herbs often smell nice. They can surround your home with a pleasing perfume that exudes a true sense of "home."

Many people plant parsley, rosemary, and thyme in their herb gardens, but there are other herbs that can be planted as well. Cilantro is a little milder than parsley, and it has a different look. Mint is another herb that many people do not think to plant, as is lavender. Both of these herbs look different, and they both give off very nice scents.

Another herb with a very attractive smell is Roman chamomile. Even though some of these herbs may be less frequently used, it is possible to find plenty of recipes that use them, and lavender and chamomile are noted for their usefulness in providing an atmosphere of calm. So even the scents can be of use. Simply bring them into the house and enjoy the feelings that accompany the smell.

Vegetable gardens are other edible landscaping devices that can look very attractive. They, too, can be planted in a variety of climates, and can be grown in a variety of soils. There are some plants that grow only in certain regions, but your basic garden fare can be grown almost anywhere. Just the look of green plants has been shown to be soothing, and when you grow your own food, it adds another dimension of satisfied feelings associated with self-confidence and accomplishment.

Every vegetable has its own look to it, and so it is possible to enjoy a variety of different looks by carefully choosing the plants that you grow. However, you should choose, first and foremost, plants that you will eat. If you are not going to eat much squash, avoid planting it. But there are plenty of vegetables that have very attractive looking plants and even flowers. Peas have cute little flowers and send up beautiful curly vines. And there are many species of pepper that look beautiful after the fruit has arrived, with their yellow, greens, and reds.

When you use herb and vegetable gardens as part of the landscape, there is no need to plant them all together in one place. Spread them around the yard. Use tomato plants and squash plants (including pumpkins) can be used as accents. Herbs make excellent ground cover. Most vegetables and herbs can be grown very successfully in containers.

You can make a very attractive landscape design if you use flower boxes for your herbs, and if you use quaint old antique washtubs for things like beans. Pretty sticks can be decorated to

emerge from decorative tins for your peas.

The great thing about growing vegetable and herb gardens as part of your landscape is the fact that they are edible. They do not cost very much to plant, and they can save you even more money down the road when you buy less produce at the grocery store. Additionally, if you have too much you can always bottle or freeze it for later. Many people use the excess plants from their gardens as gifts to their neighbors or family members.

There is no reason to relegate herb and vegetable gardens to some hidden corner of the property, or even to garden in a conventional way, with large plots. You can add distinction to your yard by using the unique and inexpensive method of landscaping with herbs and vegetables.

Lawn Lingo: Ten Basic Facts You Should Know

Maybe you're a first time homeowner and you don't know a thing about taking care of a lawn. You look at the neighbors lawns and they are beautifully manicured and a beautiful shade of green with nary a brown spot to be found. You think to yourself, "Can I have that kind of lawn?" Sure, you can. There are just a few basic facts that you need to know.

Lawn Seed: You will need to know what type of grass will grow in your climate zone. Not every strain of grass will grow in cooler climates and some won't thrive in the southern or warmer zone. Investigate what type of seed you need for your soil as well, and is it sunny, shady or a mixture of both? Read the labels on the seed packages; there is important information for you there. Prepare your seedbed and use high quality lawn seed. Re-seed annually and always repair bare patches as soon as you notice them. While you are spreading the seed, shake the box well so the seed mixture is well mixed.

Mowing: Yes there are good and bad ways to mow your lawn. If you are in a drought condition, you shouldn't even mow, as it would take its toll on the health of your lawn. Mow regularly and avoid cutting too low. Don't think just because you cut it lower you won't have to mow as often. If you cut it too low, you leave it wide open to burning or getting taken over by heartier weeds and lawn disease.

Water: Your lawn needs water to thrive just as you do. If you are experiencing a real dry season, be sure that you water your lawn frequently. That goes along with not cutting it too short when you mow.

Fertilizing: The products that are on the market now are normally combined as a fertilizer and a weed killer. Your lawn needs to be fertilized in spring and summer as well as in late fall. Use a fertilizer that is rich in nitrogen. Use a spreader and be sure to spread your fertilizer and weed control evenly. Always fill your spreader on the driveway or somewhere else, never on your lawn. That can cause an excess of fertilizer to fall into your grass and leave a burnt spot.

Raking: We all know it is important to rake leaves in the fall or to mulch them. Leaving dead leaves on the lawn could give you ugly looking brown spots when the grass starts turning green

in the spring. You also need to rake out old grass, or thatch, during the spring and again in the fall just before the grass goes dormant.

Trim: Yes it is a little extra work to trim the yard but it also gives the lawn a beautiful finished look. A weed trimmer is important to have if you have articles in your lawn that you can't totally get to with a mower. In addition, if you have a fence it will help your yard look trim and neat and professionally finished.

Weed control: Weed control is a very important factor in having a beautiful lawn. A four-leaf clover might be lucky, but it's still a weed. Dandelions, broadleaf weeds, and other types of weeds can attack a week lawn. There are very good weed control products on the market today and they are usually noted what type of weed the product was developed to get rid of.

Pests: Your lawn might be infested and you not even realize it. There are two types of pests, those that exist above the ground, and those existing below ground. Above ground pests would include the chinch bug, cutworms, armyworms and green bugs. One of the most prevalent below ground pests would be the white grub. Using the right type of pesticide easily destroys all of these.

Tools: Some tools will be a must when you have a lawn. One of course is a mower. You can pick the type of mower that best fits your needs from a hand pushed mower to a self-propelled mower all the way up to a riding mower. Along with a mower, you might consider having a weed blower or vacuum, an edger, a trimmer for a more professional looking lawn and a simple rake. The rake will be used in both early spring and in fall to remove thatch, dead grasses, and raking the leaves in the fall.

Lawn Disease: Yes even lawns get sick and end up with some unusual diseases. Lawn fungus can show up as well as mushrooms. Yes even mushrooms, there seemed to be an abundance of those in my area this year and it did seem strange to see them growing in my lawn. Other types of disease are snow mold, found in the colder climates when the snow sits on the lawn for an extended amount of time. Brown patches will start in a circle and often spread outwards in a circular or horseshoe pattern. Dollar spots are brown small spots shaped like a silver dollar and usually brown or straw colored. These can be found in lawns with a low amount of nitrogen.

Preparing to Build Wooden Fences in the Landscape

While chain link fences are use in some landscapes, most people prefer to make use of wooden fences when building an attractive landscape. This is because wood is a rather versatile material that can be made to look a variety of ways. Installing your own wood fence requires time and energy, but it is often worth it as you can have privacy without detracting from the look of your landscape.

Even if you do not build a very tall fence, a wood fence around your yard can prevent unwanted animals (like dogs) from getting into your yard. But before you begin, there are a few things to know about preparing to build wooden fences.

It is important to know the basic elements of the wooden fence before you get started. These are the elements that almost every fence consists of, and are almost universally necessary to build an attractive and effective fence. You will need posts. These are vertical elements that are placed in the ground. They rise above the ground, of course, and properly set posts are essential for keeping all of the other components in place.

Some posts extend above the top of the fence for decorative purposes and others are only as high as the fence itself. Another important element of support is the rail. Rails act as spanners, connect the posts. They run parallel to the ground and serve as the horizontal support elements. Almost every fence style makes use of top and bottom rails, and some also utilize middle rails. Finally, panels are required for the successful fence. Sometimes the panels are referred to as boards. There are open fence styles that make no use of panels, but panels of latticework or even just straight boards are the main elements that provide privacy.

Next, you should prepare to install your wood fence. If you would like your installation to go smoothly, you should plan and prepare so that everything is in order before you begin. It is virtually impossible to complete a landscape project without any hiccups, but with a little advance planning you should be able to take care of things in a relatively smooth manner.

The first thing you need to do is check with your local zoning or building board to find out the height or design restrictions. Additionally, chances are that you will need a building permit before you begin. You also want to make sure that the fence you build will be within the borders of your own property. If you need to have a survey beforehand to satisfy the neighbors, do so, as this can save you legal fees down the road if the neighbor decides to sue.

Another thing of paramount importance is to find out from the local utility companies where the underground gas, electric, and power lines are located. Additionally, check with the phone and cable companies regarding possible underground lines they may have. It can be dangerous to damage such lines, and if you do so, you are responsible for the costs associated with repairing the damage.

Be sure that you have a plan for your fence, based upon the preparation discussed above. Know where you are going to place your posts beforehand, and have an idea of how high you want your fences. You should also have an idea of how deep your postholes will be. If you have properly planned your fence, then you will be able to complete it that much faster.

Also, make sure you have all of the necessary tools on hand. These tools include a posthole auger, a shovel and a wheelbarrow (to mix concrete), a hammer and a punch, a power saw, a level, mason's line, and a carpenter's square. Many of these tools need not be purchased; it is possible to rent them for a reasonable price (especially the posthole auger, which many people do not own).

Once you have everything in place, you are ready to build a fence. Follow the plan carefully, and try to stick to your budget. When you have everything properly prepared beforehand, you will be surprised to realize how fast the work goes, and how good your fence looks as part of your landscape.

Starting from Scratch: How to Prepare the Ground and Plant Your Perfect Lawn

Starting a lawn from scratch can be a daunting task. However, if done properly, you can give yourself a lawn that will be much less trouble to care for than one that is not given the time and effort. If you are creating a lawn where a newly built house has been placed, there is a good chance the topsoil has been scraped off so you will likely need to make some adjustments to the soil.

First thing you will have to do on the road to your new lawn is to test the soil. At your local do-it-yourself store you will be able to find a self-testing soil kit. However, the local Agricultural Extension Service will be able to do it much more accurately than a do-it-yourself kit can and they generally will test your soil for fewer than ten dollars. The test will let you know the pH of the soil and whether or not it needs phosphorus or potassium.

If it turns out your soil is too acidic, you can correct the problem by adding lime. On the other hand, you can use sulfur if the soil is found to be too alkaline. If you decide to use your Agricultural Extension Service for the testing, they will also be able to tell you what to add, how much to add, and how often to add it in order to grow your lawn. No matter what you need to add or till into the soil, once you have done it you should rake it flat and remove any large stones from the area. You are ready to get going on your new lawn.

You will need to make a decision on what type of seed you are going to use for your new yard. You can ask the Agricultural Extension Service for advice about what grows best in your area, you can ask someone you see with a nice lawn, or talk to someone at a local lawn and garden store. Once you have decided what you are growing, buy some seed, but keep in mind that you generally will not get the best results with cheaper seeds.

Your climate will play a large role in when you plant and what you plant. If you live in a warm southern climate you will likely be planting a warm-season grass seed. These will need to be spread in the spring. If you live in the north or Midwest, you will likely be planting a cool-season grass like fine fescue or Kentucky bluegrass. These should be planted in the fall for best results.

To seed your lawn you can use your hand, a broadcast spreader, or a drop spreader. The broadcast spreader will likely be your best bet if you have a small to medium sized yard. The drop spreader is made more for larger areas. Once you have planted the seeds, you should water the area at least a couple of times a day. By keeping the seed bed moist, you will be making sure that the grass successfully germinates.

If you don't want to mess with seeding a lawn, there are a couple of other options. You can plant grass plugs. Plugs are small little groups of grass that spread by runners if you plant them in a prepared bed of soil. The other option is to look at is laying sod. Sod is like lawn carpet. It can also be installed any time of year except for the winter. Sod will give you quick results, but still must be put into prepared soil to take correctly.

New houses are popping up all over the country, and people are gobbling them up quickly. When a new home is built, however, the area around it is often torn up during the construction process. Not only is the grass torn up and destroyed, but the top soil may also be missing, and

it is an important component in a good lawn.

In order to get your lawn going, you should have the soil tested, get the pH where it needs to be, and select the proper grass for your lawn. Once you have prepped the soil and have your seed spread out, you just need to water and care for the area and before you know it you have a gorgeous, thick, and inviting yard with your new house.

Tips for Planning Your Landscape

When you decide to plan your landscape, it does, indeed, require a plan. This means that you should carefully think about what you are doing, and what you would like to do. It also means budgeting and determining how much you can spend for your landscaping. Creating a home landscape for your yard is something that can be very costly if you do not carefully plan your landscape. Additionally, without a plan, you may end up with something you do not want and that costs money.

The first thing you should do when planning your landscape is to look at what you already have. Use a critical eye to determine what you like and what you dislike about the current landscape design. Also take into account how your home looks during different seasons.

Think about how many year cycles you are likely to remain, and think about what you like and dislike about each one. List the blessings of your current landscape situation, large and small, and list what you would like to change, or what you wish you had. It is actually a good idea to do this for an entire year, so that you can see what you have at each season. Plus, taking your time will help you develop a better plan.

Another thing to do when planning your landscape is to keep in mind the needs you have for the space. You do not want your landscape ideas to interfere with family activities and the family routine. Would planting a shrub in a particular spot inhibit the walk to the mailbox? Putting a flowerbed in the middle of the lawn may upset family games.

Would adding a deck make it more convenient to have family barbeque functions? Are there features, like a sandbox, that you would like to add to the landscape for your grandchildren? The fact of the matter is that when you are planning your landscape, you should take into account what the space will be used for. This is an essential part of the landscaping process, as the best designs combine attractiveness with utility.

Keeping a journal or folder of landscape ideas is another way to help you as you plan your landscape. You can keep your lists of current things you like and dislike, as well as your plan for the use of your landscape space in this folder or journal as well. You can gather ideas you like from looking at pictures in magazines, books, on the Internet, or by driving around the neighborhood and taking pictures.

Make sure you include next to any images you have the things that you think you will need to build a particular feature, or notes on things you would do to tweak a design to make it all your own. You can even combine design ideas into something that you like. The point is to, while

you are thinking about what you already have and what you will use your landscape for, look for ideas that will help you accomplish your goals.

Other things you should do while planning your landscape design is to check on building codes and make sure of property lines. You should also find out from your utility companies where underground power, telephone, and cable wires are run. You do not want to hit one of these important things while digging around in your yard and building your landscape. Getting all of this stuff figured out before you finalize your landscape plans can help you adjust for possibly having to relocate a feature in your plan or for having to scale down the size of something.

Another tool that can be very helpful as you plan your landscape is the use of landscape design software. Much of this software can be used to figure out which plants may look nice in your yard, and which plants would go with your house. Some programs even allow you to scan in an image of your own house in order to better get an idea of the possibilities. Most programs cost less than \$70, and can even be used as references to determine which plants are best suited to survive in your climate.

With careful planning, and the use of a few tips, it is possible for you to plan out your landscape in such a way that you use your available space and your money much more efficiently.

Landscaping Kits to Build Your Own Pond

Having a water feature installed can be a very expensive proposition. But, if you would like a pond for your property, it is actually possible to build your own pond. While you can build it by buying needed supplies individually and then assembling a proper pond, it can be difficult to make sure that you get all of the right supplies and it can be frustrating to figure out what you should do, and how to do it.

Luckily, however, the do-it-yourselfer can actually build a pond using a kit. This makes the whole process easier and it makes it possible for you to have a water feature on your property without paying all the money for professional installation and without the frustration of trying to do it from scratch on your own.

Putting in a pond requires a great deal of physical labor to complete, even if you are using a kit. A hole still needs to be dug, and the proper components need to be placed. There is no easy way to put in a water feature. But, if you get a kit with step-by-step instructions, and you enlist the help of family and friends, it is possible for you to install your pond with relative ease and at a reasonable cost.

There are even some companies that offer different customized solutions. These solutions include things like creating a cascading stream into your pond, or having a waterfall that is shorter or taller than the kit specifies. If you know that you have some specific needs, make sure you visit a specialty shop or buy your kit from a company that specializes in water features and can help you modify your kit appropriately.

There are a few components that your kit should have for proper installation of a water feature. These components include items such as skimmers, liners, pumps, filters, filter support tubes, liners, underlayments, check valves, PVC pipes, PVC glues and primers, rocks, bulkhead fittings, silicone, and bacteria to maintain the balance of your pond.

Other things that many kits come with, and that are good to check for, are things like patch tape, waterfall stone, and skimmer bags. Many kits make use of expanding foam as well. Make sure that your kit has all of the items you need before you begin, or make sure that you know where to get items that do not come in the kit.

Your kit should come with an owner's manual and instructions. There are many kits that come with architectural drawings, and these can be very useful. If you have a kit with good illustrations, it can help you more effectively build your pond by allowing you to not only read about what you need to do, but to also see what you need to do. Make sure you read the instructions in their entirety before you begin.

Also, make sure that you understand the directions. If there is something that you do not understand, contact the store that you bought the kit from, or contact the company that produces the kit. You should be able to get help from either of those sources. Make sure that your kit comes with a warranty and with support. It is worth it to pay a little more money for a kit that comes with expert advice and everything you need.

Costs relating to redoing things, buying extra components, and getting replacement parts if you break something by putting it together wrong can really add up. Making sure that you have access to the manufacturer of the kit, or someone who gives explanations for free can save money, time, and headache further down the road.

A well-placed water feature can be a very pleasing part of your landscape. The running water makes a soothing noise, and it can be very relaxing to look at water. Water is one of those things that provide comfort and interest in many settings. Additionally, a water feature can attract birds and other wildlife to your yard and provide you with beautiful music and fascinating creatures to listen to and look at. Children love water features, and if properly supervised can learn to appreciate the water and find amusement for hours.

What Kind of Landscaping Equipment Do You Need to Have Around the House?

Everyone's home could use a little landscaping and if you want to do some landscaping you are going to need to have the proper landscaping equipment around in order to do it. There are a few integral pieces of landscaping equipment that you simply cannot do without.

There are other pieces of equipment that are great to have but not absolutely necessary. And some of the landscaping equipment can be quite expensive. If you are going to be doing something that is not one of your regular landscaping jobs then you might want to consider renting some of your landscaping equipment rather than spending too much money to buy it.

Some of the popular kinds of landscaping equipment that many people have without even realizing that is what it is are things like fertilizer spreaders and other applicators. These are not thought of as landscaping equipment sometimes but that is in fact exactly what they are. Do you have this kind of landscaping equipment? DO you use it? If you do not use these applicators you should start. By using these kinds of things you can make your yard so much prettier and healthier. Your lawn will be lush and full and you will not suffer from the weeds that plague you any more.

If you are planning on doing a lot of work on your yard you are going to need to get yourself some irrigations tools. This is especially important when you are going to be planting some new plants or trees. You need to have all of your living shrubbery and flowers getting the right amount of water at all times. In order to get this system working right you might also want to invest in some landscaping equipment like timers and sprinklers.

This way you know that your yard is getting watered when it needs it even when you are not home. This is especially great for when you leave town and in the summer when you are under strict orders about how much water can be used each week.

Landscaping equipment is important to any job, if you want to make your yard as great as you can then you need to get the best landscaping equipment. You can find everything that you need for any job online. The Internet is hands down the best place to shop for any of your landscaping equipment needs.

Common Landscaping Tools

For the avid do-it-yourself landscaper, the right tools are important. After all, if one wishes to save money on the expenses associated with having a well cared for yard, it is best to make sure that he or she has all of the tools necessary to create an attractive landscape. By understanding some of the most common tools used for basic landscaping needs, you can ensure that you have everything you need to keep your lawn in the best possible shape, bringing delight and distinction to your grounds, be they large or small.

Shovels, rakes, trowels, and hand cultivators. These are the most basic of tools when it comes to landscaping. Every home should be supplied with these basic implements. They make just about every landscaping endeavor possible. Shovels to remove sod and turn soil, as well as dig the holes necessary for fixtures like trees and hardscapes.

Rakes are essential to smooth out planting beds and prepare ground for things like sod without packing the dirt. Trowels and hand cultivators allow you to perform minute work that requires more attention to detail. All of these tools are necessary to the proper functioning and care of a landscape.

Pruners and shears. These tools are used to improve the appearance of woody plants and trees. They keep plants from encroaching in other areas, and they also promote the overall health of the plants. They help maintain a neat appearance, and if you have topiary concerns, they are indispensable in maintaining a set shape. There are hand pruners, tools that help with

the smaller branches and are easier to use, loppers for getting thicker branches that are too large for pruners, and even pruning saws that can help you with the toughest of branches. Hedge shears provide a way for hedges to be trimmed more conscientiously than with electric or gas-run trimmers (although these are widely available and can make maintaining hedges much easier).

Lawnmower. This is perhaps one of the most common and most obvious of landscaping tools. It is meant to keep the grass at a reasonable level, and to keep the lawn neat and healthy. Related to lawnmowers in the trimming department are things like weed whackers, which are very useful in keeping edges that can't be cut by a mower nice and neat. Additionally, the use of some special machinery, designed to eliminate thick brush is useful to have on hand, even if it is only in the form of a machine rented once a year.

Other tools of interest. Of course, there are specialty tools that may be needed depending upon on the features of your landscape. If you have a water fixture, it is important to make sure that you have the proper pumps and filters, and that you have little skimmers that can allow you to remove larger pieces of debris from the water.

Automatic sprinklers can make watering the lawn and your other plants much easier, and you should have a garden hose for special watering needs. Regular household tools such as hammer and nails, levels, and drills can be helpful if you have built landscape features like patios, decks, pergolas, and trellises. They can also be useful in building things like containers and creating raised beds.

Wheelbarrow. A wheelbarrow will always be of infinite use for the avid landscaper and improver. Wheelbarrows are very useful for moving debris as well as bringing needed implements to their proper places. They haul dirt and bring in plants. They make it possible for one person to carry a load that otherwise she or he would not be able to handle. For the serious landscaper, a wheelbarrow is indeed necessary.

When you have all of the tools necessary to take care of your landscape, then you are well rewarded for your hard work. Acquiring the more common tools can also save you money in the long run, as they can be used over and over again.

Additionally, many of the more common landscape tools are fairly small in size and easy to store in a garage or a shed. As long as they are kept neatly arranged in place, they are easy to get to when needed, and not hard to find. Proper maintenance of your tools is important: keep them from becoming rusty, and make sure your lawnmower and other gas or electric implements are well oiled and always have plenty of gas. Proper care of your tools ensures that you will be able to properly care for your landscape.

More Landscaping Tools

Landscaping tools are a great gift for people of all ages. Most of us cannot wait for the first signs of spring so we can break out our garden tools and get started on landscaping our yards for the new season. One way to make this task easier and more fun is to have all the right

tools on hand to make the perfect landscape masterpiece.

The right shears

A great tool for any gardener is a pair of hand shears or clippers. These are used for trimming bushes and shrubs. You can buy the least expensive pair at the store and still get the same great results.

Shovels and spades

There are so many different shapes and sizes of shovels to choose from. You want to choose a shovel or spade that best fits you. Spades are best used for digging and a flat shovel is great for removing dirt or creating bigger spaces. The handles on shovels come in different lengths. Shorter handles are great for digging in smaller areas. Longer handles make moving dirt an easier job for any gardener.

The old rake

A metal rake is the best garden tool. There are cheaper versions of rakes out there, however, rakes with metal teeth are a lot stronger and last longer than the plastic ones. Rakes are a big help with moving dirt and debris from any landscaped area.

Garden hoses and wheel barrows

The length of your garden hose really depends on the size of your property and where your water hookup is located. It is recommended that you purchase a rack or wheel to keep your hose free from kinks and bends that can interrupt water pressure and performance. Keeping your garden hose neatly stored away will also incorporate a well-maintained look.

Wheelbarrows can be used for anything in the landscaping process. They are great for moving dirt or plants from one location to the next. They are also a big help for carrying supplies and garden accessories around from place to place. However if you are looking for something to help with the load of garden tools and accessories, then you may want to look into getting yourself a cart. They are less expensive and weigh which makes them easier to move around.

Other helpful tools for landscaping are gloves, trimmers, pole pruner, watering can, and of course a lawn mower. If you are someone who works in the sun, then remember to wear your sun block and that oversized sun hat to keep the hot glare of the sun out of your eyes.

You do not and should not spend a fortune on your gardening tools. Most of the above mention can be bought for only a small investment, but the results they bring will leave you with a huge profit.

Do You Know How to Choose the Right Landscaping Supply Store?

Choosing the right landscaping supply store means thinking outside the box. You have to stop thinking like a regular consumer and start thinking like a person about to take on a job and who wants to save some cash. There are many landscaping supply stores out there but only a few of them are worth visiting and these are not the ones that you see the ads for on TV.

The landscaping supply stores that you want to buy your materials from are the ones that cater primarily to those in the industry. If you can get your landscaping materials from a landscaping supply store that does not usually sell to the general public, or at least is not well known by the general public then you are in business. This can take some work though.

Try talking to a professional landscaper to see if you can get the info out of him about the closest landscaping supply store. See what he or she says. What landscaping supply store does this company use? You can tell them that you need to know this in order to make sure that they are getting and using only the best materials. This should work in getting you a name. Then you can go down there yourself and get all of the materials and tools that you need to complete the job on your own. Sound sneaky? Well, it is but it works and it will save you hundreds of dollars on your landscaping supply store supplies.

If you just cannot bring yourself to be so treacherous you can try looking in the phone book. You may find something like this under contractors; it depends on where you live. Do whatever you have to do to find out where the pros get their stuff and you are well on your way to saving some serious money this year.

All of the pros get their landscaping supply store items from somewhere so all you have to do is find out where. Most of these places will sell to regular people like you but they do not bother with a lot of advertising because they do well with the companies. These landscaping supply stores do not need to business form the little guys like you. But if you can find these landscaping supply stores you are set.

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