

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 89

The Natural Landscape

Natural Landscape Explained

Natural landscaping is considered working with—not against—nature. The principles of informal style best suit a natural landscape. Informality allows the nature of the plants to shine rather than their shape. Formal gardens require much more work to create perfect uniformity, which is immensely time consuming and costly.

Benefits of Low Maintenance

Informal or natural landscapes create a light-hearted feeling, with the plants growing in more natural, unaltered forms. Natural landscape can seem a bit chaotic at a glance, but the purpose of this style is not to be rigidly ordered.

The main attractions of an informal garden are flexibility and low maintenance requirements. Formal lawns and gardens require immense amounts of pruning, watering and spraying to maintain perfection all season long. By limiting the amount of lawn area and replacing hedges with stone walls, you can reduce your maintenance requirements.

Concepts of Design

Natural landscapes consider materials such as ornamental grasses, hardy perennials, bulbs and wildflowers as key ingredients in the garden. These plants help maintain the natural appeal of your garden.

When planning large, asymmetrical plantings, use bold colour combinations, for example, yellow and purple; or orange, violet and turquoise; or even different shades of the same colour. The more natural appeal

of colour and plant location creates a relaxed feeling that invites guests of all species to visit your garden.

Selection of Plants

Choosing compatible native plants is very important. Arranging plants that require little water next to those requiring a lot of water can cause problems.

Your plant's pest and disease resistance is important to selection to ensure lower maintenance and longer plant life. Although a plant's resistance to pests and diseases may be good, planting in larger quantities in proximity can cause pests to be attracted to a food source and cause unexpected damage.

Knowing the soil type you have is important when choosing plants. This ensures availability of sufficient water and minerals for your plants' roots.

Noting the direction of the sun and wind can play a key role in the location of plants depending on their growth requirements.

Also important to consider is the mature size of your plants; otherwise, they may end up overgrowing one another as well as your patio or walkway.

A Delicate Process

Natural landscaping is a delicate process that if done correctly can result in a relaxing, low-maintenance garden that lasts for years. If natural landscape is what you desire, then the selection of your plants can help to maintain a natural habitat while providing you with an enjoyable atmosphere.

Heather Minow, Class of 2006