

plant selection assured that the plants chosen would also be of an environmentally sound nature. Thus there will be no need for chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Also, consideration was given to natural and native plantings while making sure to avoid any invasive types.

This type of approach will work in your own yard as well. Just take it a step at a time, then step back and admire the results!

If you have a question about any gardening problem or procedure, call the Penn State Extension Office. We'll be happy to answer your questions.

Happy gardening!

One in a series of informational brochures produced by the Penn State Extension Master Gardeners of Chester County, sponsored by Penn State University's Cooperative Extension. Penn State Extension Master Gardeners are volunteers who educate the public on best practices in consumer horticulture and environmental stewardship. They receive horticultural training from Penn State University's College of Agricultural Sciences Cooperative Extension.

For answers on any home gardening issue, call the Master Gardener Hotline at 610-696-3500 or email chestermg@psu.edu.

March 2011

Penn State Extension Master Gardeners
Government Services Center
601 Westtown Road, Suite 370
West Chester, PA 19380-0990
610-696-3500
chestermg@psu.edu
Chester.extension.psu.edu

An OUTREACH program of the College of Agricultural Sciences

Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research and extension programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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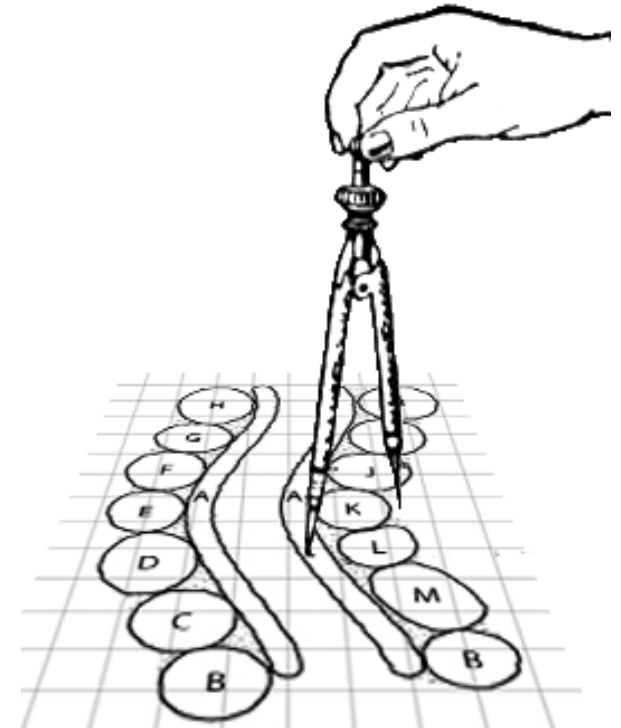
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Penn State **Extension** Planning Your Garden

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Why Plan a Garden?

A job well begun is half done, said Aristotle. Taking the time to plan will actually save you time down the road. You will reduce the need to move plants around, increase the odds of the plants thriving, and minimize the costs for supplies. Whether you are renovating an older garden or starting from scratch, you will be most successful if you plan ahead. Most of all, planning gives you the opportunity to consider the gardener's first rule: right plant, right place.

Where to Begin

The first step for any garden is to draw a "map" of your property. This map should include the property boundaries; an outline of the house including porches, doors, and windows; and existing features such as trees, large rocks, driveways, sidewalks, sheds, etc.

You will want to make notes about the property itself. Does it have a slope? During heavy rainstorms, is there runoff, which could wash the soil out of your garden? Is there a spot that is always damp even in the driest weather? Is there a constant breeze? Where does the sun rise and set in relation to where you'd like a garden? Does it get sun just in the morning, only after noon, or all day? Is there an attractive view to preserve or an unsightly one to conceal?

Play it Safe

Next, you should note on the map any overhead or underground wires, gas or water lines, sewer pipes, septic systems, drain fields, or similar items. This is to avoid problems down the line—like having to remove or severely prune a tree growing into wires, or clogging the septic system.

Simply dial 8-1-1 to contact the Pennsylvania One Call System (it's free to homeowners working on their own properties) at least three days before you dig and someone will come out and mark the locations of all utilities for you. This is more than just a good safety practice; it's the law.

One other thing you might do as part of your planning process is to check with your municipal office to ask about zoning or other ordinances regarding fencing and placement of trees or shrubs. This is easier to do before you plant than to redo it when you find you've violated the rules.

Take Time to Think

Next, think about your lifestyle. Do you have a more casual outdoor activity-type of family or a quiet formal life? Do you have pets? How much time do you want to devote to your garden? Who will maintain it?

Then, think about the garden itself. Is it meant to provide privacy, enhance the property, provide color, grow vegetables, attract wildlife, or some other reason altogether? Do you want to include a special feature such as statuary, pond, or trellis? What people places will you include (paths, benches, views, places for activities such as outdoor dining or children's activities)?

The Areas of the Garden

Your garden should include public, private, and service areas. The public area is seen and used by passers-by, and your plantings should be made with safety in mind, that is, shrubbery and trees should not obstruct the view of traffic, nor jut out over sidewalks so as to prevent foot traffic. You should avoid poisonous plants, those with thorns or other hazards, or plants that can be irritating if brushed against. You should also consider potential sources of damage to the garden such as neighborhood dogs and cats, snowplows, road salt, pollution, tire ruts, utility crews, and so forth.

The private area is for you, and can be what you want it to be—an area for the children to play, for family activities, outdoor dining or entertaining, or an attractive view from inside your home. It can be a haven for wildlife, or a manicured formal garden. This is where you can express yourself and create a space that is for your own enjoyment.

The service area would include storage sheds, areas for hoses and pots, firewood piles, trash cans, compost bins, and perhaps lines for clothes drying. With a large yard you may be able to isolate these things into one area, but with a small yard, you may need to simply disguise them in the garden.

If you are planning to landscape your entire yard, you may want to do it in steps, thus spreading out the time, effort, and money invested. If you are doing a small yard, or only part of it, you can do it all as one project.

The Demonstration Garden

The garden beds on either side of the entrance of the Government Services Center were designed and created as a low maintenance multi-seasonal interest garden. As with all designs, it began with a site evaluation: the site is full sun with lots of extra heat reflected from the glass on the building and absorbed from the sidewalk and driveway. There is no irrigation, so the area also tends to be dry. The next step was a soil test, which identified the soil condition as fair.

Based on this evaluation, a list was created of plants that were well suited to growing in these conditions. This list was then narrowed down using additional criteria such as the desire to be low maintenance, to offer color and texture, and to provide year-round interest. Careful attention to