HOME AND GARDEN COLUMN

DESIGNING LANDSCAPES

Designing your landscape can be a fun, yet stressful event. Fortunately, living in Central Florida, one of the most popular tourist destinations, we can turn to our area resorts and theme parks for inspiration.

Now is a great time to visit those tourist destinations. Many of them have just planted their spring gardens and are having garden festivals, including Walt Disney World. Now through June 3rd, Epcot is holding the 14th Annual International Flower and Garden Festival, which the University of Florida/IFAS is one of the sponsors.

When designing a landscape, remember that a garden or landscape is what you make of it. It is an ever-changing space of your home that should reflect who you are. One of my favorite songs is "Garden Party" by Rick Nelson. Although the meaning of the song was never intended to have anything to do with gardening as the title implies, it definitely can pertain to it. One of the lines of the song states, "You can't please everyone, so you got to please yourself". These words can be taken to heart in all aspects of life, including designing your garden.

A garden should be designed to please you and fit your needs, not your neighbors or what the experts say on television. Many landscape designers have their own opinions to what should or should not be in a garden design. I believe that a certain design element should only be in your landscape if it is what you want. Some landscape designers have beautiful designs, however, there may be some designs that will never fulfill your needs or idea of what an attractive garden entails.

As you visit the area attractions and find inspiration in their gardens, do be aware that sometimes the "magic" of the landscapes in the resorts and theme parks may not always be the best for a home landscape. However, there are ways that those fantasy landscapes can be modified to fit almost any landscape. It can be most likely accomplished by changing the plant selection to be more Florida friendly and downsizing the amount of plants used.

Resorts and theme parks have a large budget and many resources for plants that many of us do not have. They have the ability to import plants from all over the country and world, leaving us envious of their gardens and plant selection. Some of their plants may also not be the best suited for the Central Florida climate conditions. The good news is that there are many plants available locally that are acclimated to Central Florida and are able to mimic the same theme or look as you see at the tourist destinations.

Also take note that the resorts and theme parks require that "instant" landscape look. This involves using more plant material than what is necessary. They do not have the time to sacrifice waiting until the plants grow to fill the empty space and reach their maximum size. Creating the "instant" landscape in a home garden would not be practical or economical. Leaving enough space for the plants to grow will help ensure a longer, healthier life for the plant.

Have fun looking for inspirations for your landscape at the local resorts and theme parks, just remember that you may not be able to recreate exactly the same landscape that they have created, but you can come close. Also remember the words of Rick Nelson as you design your landscape, "You can't please everyone, so you got to please yourself".
On May 5th thru the 7th, I will be leading a garden tour at the Epcot International Flower and Garden Festival at noon and 4pm near the Germany Pavilion. Also, May 6th thru the 10th, I will be joining other garden and music enthusiasts at the American Pavilion in Epcot to hear the songs of Rick Nelson sung by his sons, Matthew and Gunnar Nelson. And when they perform their dad's song "Garden Party", I will have a smile on my face as a horticulturalist, knowing that this song can really relate to everything in our lives, including gardening. I hope that you all can join me there for these events.

For more information on landscape design and plant selection, please contact the Osceola County Master Gardeners at (321) 697-3000. They are available to take your calls Monday thru Friday from 10am to 2pm.

Jennifer Welshans  
Horticulture Agent  
Osceola County Extension Service  
1921 Kissimmee Valley Lane  
Kissimmee, FL 34744  
321-697-3000  
jwel2@osceola.org  
osceola.ifas.ufl.edu  
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