

Triangle

DECEMBER 2020

HOME

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BLACK BEAUTIES



CHERRY-PICK YOUR PLANTS

By David Payne
Photography by Tad Davis

The right plant in the right place makes all the difference in the quest for a tidy landscape.

The signs and symptoms of poor landscape planning usually sound like this:

- “My yard maintenance is overwhelming! I can’t keep up.”
- “My house is hidden by these overgrown trees.”
- “The walkway to my front door is buckling in places.”
- “I can’t keep this shrub healthy. It seems to be dropping leaves and looks puny all the time.”

The number one reason for landscaping complaints is simple: the right plant was not put in the best place.

If yard maintenance is overwhelming because pruning has to be performed too frequently, it’s because the plants, at full maturity, are planted too close to the house or not planted with the mature spread in mind. Similarly, if trees have grown so large that they are interfering with the curb appeal of a home, they were never suited to be front-yard accent trees. One example I see is the Little Gem Southern Magnolia tree. It may be marketed as a dwarf species, but it grows as large as any other magnolia, just at a slower growth rate.

Other problem areas include hardscapes and outdoor living areas. If, for instance, the pool is constantly filled with debris, consider the trees planted nearby. Often





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homeowners love the color of crape myrtles poolside, but they constantly drop flowers and can be enjoyed much more if placed in other parts of the landscape. Other trees such as weeping willow, river birch, and red maple send out invasive root systems that uproot sidewalks, invade septic systems, and cause problems in house foundations. These types of trees should be planted well away from houses, hardscapes, and vulnerable underground utilities.

If a homeowner is struggling with shrubs that drop leaves, have pests, or are generally underperforming, it is usually another case of wrong plant, wrong place. If plants are well suited to the location, they will perform well with limited maintenance.

Planting the right plant in the right place in the right proportion has another wonderful benefit of saving homeowners money.

- Appropriately spaced planting means fewer plants are needed to achieve the desired look.
- Not having to move and replant in five to ten years because of overcrowding saves money.
- Planning keeps the home’s foundation, outdoor living, and hardscape areas healthy and intact.

Plant tags are often misleading. Don’t rely on them for determining how large a specimen may grow to maturity. A licensed professional landscape contractor is the best source to help determine the right plant for the right location. ♦

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