



Common Landscaping Mistakes

Rants, Regrets, and Solutions

G. Edwin Varner

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Preface

The word “landscaping” can imply anything that transforms a plot of land into a cultivated gardening site, complete with leafy ornamental and blooming plants. The size can be a small bed, a house border, or an enlarged island-shaped or mounded design, usually surrounded by a lawn.

Transforming this area is like an artist slowly creating a colorful painting from a blank canvas. Any gardener, from novice to experienced, can transform a bare or grassy area into a blooming or leafy ornamental wonderland. Like any artist or gardener, one will experience unexpected complications that can make that possible masterpiece a frustrating experience.

Landscaping any area is not a simple process; it is fraught with many confounding complications. These problems, experienced first during planning, then during digging, and later during planting, need to be acknowledged and corrected. Many of these difficult issues are experienced by everyone who decides to plant a single potted plant in the soil.

This PDF publication alerts you to potential difficulties you may encounter when creating your botanical masterpiece. Not only are these problems recognized, including personal rantings (gripes and groans) about the specific problem encountered, but also possible, simplistic solutions to ease that particular “headache-induced” mayhem. It will take excessive planning, digging, shoveling, and planting, but you will succeed.

Please note: I have copied pertinent information from my previous ebooks, corrected known mistakes, including minor grammatical and spelling errors, and added new material to this ebook.

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Introduction

When and why did we become so obsessed with how our home's landscaping looks? I mean, when we calculate all the time spent on our occupation, worries over family, health, and financial welfare allotted to each day, did we become obsessed with the appearance of our gardens and landscaping?

The simplest answer to that obscure question is when people began to have more free time to indulge in outdoor beautification projects. And then a new set of problems (plus more work and worries) began for us — like we don't have enough to be concerned about. It seems we always manage to make life more complicated, even when we try to surround ourselves with loveliness.

Although landscaping designs are usually not extravagant, most can be described, perhaps rather harshly by some critics, as haphazard “yard decorations”. Not everyone has extensive botanical knowledge, but they do know that beautiful surroundings bring comfort and joy to their lives.

The ultimate goal of garden and landscaping beautification is relaxation — not only for the mind, but also for the body. But there is a problem: the more extensive your landscaping plan and goals, the more maintenance labor, money, time, and worry it takes to achieve that “relaxation” — if that is possible. The ideal situation is somehow constructing an adequate garden that requires less effort to maintain, is stress-free, and allows plenty of prideful relaxation. Good luck in your efforts to make this ideal plan a reality. It can be achieved by knowing the potential problems to avoid or, if encountered, how to quickly rectify them.

Each of us encounters all the trials and tribulations of growing and managing areas associated with certain botanical interests. Everyone makes constant landscape gardening errors when they first plunge their hands into rich loam. We can't wait to sow, plant, care for, and

hopefully appreciate the resulting abundant blooms with their vivid colors and scents.

Well, at the time of performing these acts, and the ultimate anticipation of blossoms, we don't realize numerous faux pas, blunders, slip-ups, and goofs that do not bode well for success. To err is human, but for home gardeners, the consequences of some actions or plans can be so frustrating.

The purpose of this PDF ebook is to highlight common, if not "popular", gardening and landscaping mistakes. We all do them, mostly unintentionally, and ultimately pay the price in lost time, labor, and money. Learning not to make these judgment errors would be advantageous, so hopefully this ebook will be a helpful resource for you. I have made plenty of monumental blunders, as I relate throughout this publication. Still, I learned to accept the frown-making results and learn from them.

The following essay is divided into two main parts: **Beginning Gardening Mistakes**, which concern errors made when not learning the basics of beginning to landscape a garden, and **Specific Emerging Mistakes**, which concern all those lovely individual major goof-ups that many people either ignore or experience the "learn the hard way" disasters later on.

This ebook is not to frighten anyone from doing their own landscaping. The absolute worst mistake anyone can make is to give up and say, "*To hell with it all!*"

Many of the following mistakes are easily solvable, allowing you to make quick changes to your plans or to the plants themselves. Never give up. You will proudly muddle through like everyone else.

"Gardening is the slowest of the performing arts."

— Mac Griswold, author and independent landscape historian

Beginning Landscape Gardening Mistakes

This section highlights common mistakes often made when the impulse to begin gardening in specific areas arises. The idea is to immediately rip up a section of ground near the house and begin planting a hodgepodge variety of plants. What's so bad about doing this? Well, these actions overlook the "big picture" of basic environmental concerns, which are beyond our ability to remedy.

We need to observe, understand, and focus on what, when, and where we plant to achieve success and satisfaction in our gardening interests.

Landscape Mistake #1: Neglecting to learn the basic requirements.



There is an adage about business and real estate advertising that simply states, "Location, location, location." Is your location the best place for whatever purpose you wish to succeed in? Flower and vegetable gardens are no different. Everything in gardening is ultimately related to the proper growth of plants. From general to specific location planning of your home garden, you need to factor in the following prerequisites:

- Determining your regional climatic hardiness zone so you can choose those hardy trees, shrubs, and perennials that will most likely survive the winter cold.

- Learn the approximate last spring frost date so you don't plant annuals outdoors too early.
- Learn how much sunlight your planned project will receive during the summer months, especially on a typical sunny day, accounting for shadows from nearby trees and taller structures. Areas that receive approximately 6 or more hours of direct sun are ideal for sun-loving plants, while shadier areas are better suited to shade-tolerant plants.
- Learn about your garden soil structure, that is, how much clay, sand, gravel, and humus it is composed of. Soils vary greatly from location to location, and let's face it, no one ever has "the perfect" soil composition. Too much clay causes compaction, preventing good drainage. At the same time, too much sand and gravel leads to excessive drainage and water retention loss. Some soils have reduced humus or lack fertility, and improper pH chemistry, all of which lead to poor plant growth. Have your soil tested by your local Agricultural Service agency or by a reputable larger garden center. Any soil structural material that should be added must be added. Don't neglect these vital necessities, or your gardens will never flourish.
- Determine if your project has enough drainage slope to prevent excessive water retention. Low-lying areas should be potentially avoided, for they are difficult (not to mention costly) to repair or "upgrade". Conversely, you can convert this area into a possible attractive water garden feature.
- Avoid placing landscape beds around medium to large-sized trees. Trees provide constant shade and quickly absorb soil moisture and nutrients. Some tree species (such as walnuts) exude toxic chemicals into the soil to prevent the competing growth of surrounding plants.

Landscape Mistake #2: Neglecting to form a budget.

Well, maybe this should be Mistake # 1, because everything we plan to do costs money. Flower gardening can become expensive, starting with the above determination of where to develop a garden border or bed, and how to improve the soil.

Let's face it — flower gardening is a luxury, not a life-sustaining necessity. Goodness, I have committed heresy by stating this “unspoken” fact! It is considered (opinions may vary, though) as a popular physical and emotional enhancing activity. Anything to improve our mood and pleasure is always a life-affirming activity. (Hopefully, that helps to ease my earlier heretic faux pas.)

Unfortunately, that monetary expense never goes away. I recommend beginning with a “champagne taste on a beer budget” mindset. If you are a new gardener thinking of creating your first “petal project,” or an experienced homeowner revitalizing an old or neglected garden, please spend slowly and frugally. Sometimes, waiting, extensive planning, and saving until the next growing season are beneficial.

Landscape Mistake #3: Neglecting to form a realistic plan.

You may not have access to a whopping military budget, but any military commander would never venture into battle without a well-crafted plan of attack. All flower garden conquests need careful thought. You may have strategized where your garden should lie and the strengths or weaknesses of its soil analysis, but what size, shape, and purpose should your garden take? Just digging the soil, adding fertilizer, and planting various shrubs, trees, and pretty flowers is sure to become a disaster.

I previously authored a PDF ebook titled *“Bold Flower Garden Ideas,”* which outlines ideas for designing specific flower beds and borders. Some are simple, others are more complex, based on your current expertise in growing the flowers, your frugal budget, and simplified plans. Don’t be afraid to ask professional landscapers for advice. They may offer you a better plan and estimate the cost to do the job, potentially saving you considerable amounts of money, time, and especially, labor.

My main advice is to start out slowly and cheaply, and develop a simplified plan. Later, through learning and experience, you can increase the size, shape, and aesthetic function of your flower garden. But be aware: there will be increased expense, and that dreaded word — labor — will be encountered constantly.

Landscape Mistake #4: Neglecting to realize that plenty of labor is involved.

“Your first job is to prepare the soil. The best tool for this is your neighbor’s motorized garden tiller. If your neighbor does not own a garden tiller, suggest that he buy one.”

— Dave Barry, popular newspaper columnist and author

Let's restate that constant labor is always to be expected from the beginning of construction through the never-ending maintenance. OUCH! Well, that is one way to instantly take the fun out of gardening. Sorry, but if spending money and applying mental gymnastics to making and revising plans seem less like obstacles, then physically working to create and maintain your ideal landscape gardens can become a Herculean task.

It doesn't get any better from now on. Add the words money, plans, work, along with another heeby-geeby word called time, and you get the full flowering of what it takes to develop and maintain your vision of loveliness.

Landscape Mistake #5: Trying to copy landscape gardens shown in magazines and books.

Copying, or imitating, is not the way to plan any landscape and flower gardens. Look at the various gardening magazines and books offered to us. They are colorfully glitzy, with the most perfect photography printed. They show magnificent garden beds and borders from around the country and even the world. *"Now, that's how I want my landscaped garden to look!"*, you shout in your mind. Yes, everyone wants that type of garden — right now. Sorry, it will not happen.

These publications offer nothing but botanical pornography. It's colorfully seductive, alluring, and unattainable. It's fine if you have the money, labor, and time to create such gardens, but it's not realistic.

Those floral photos perfectly illustrate the old saying that "a picture is worth a thousand words." Unfortunately, the resulting articles rarely offer much detail about the plants, how they grow, or how long it took for the plants pictured to reach that particular size and that level of blooming abundance.

Those photos and articles can show what can be achieved over time and expertise in managing those beds and borders. Still, for beginners and even experienced home gardeners, that level of blooming magnificence can be daunting. However, it is still worth the effort if you plan ahead and avoid the numerous potential specific problems and mistakes that can be encountered.

Landscape Mistake #6: Establish your landscape garden in front of your house.



The recent name is developing a “lawn-less” landscape. No grass but plenty of flowering perennials, annuals, shrubs, and a few trees. This concept is controversial in some neighborhoods, so be aware of some heated flak from neighbors and zoning regulations.

Let’s face it — lawns are a pain to establish, costly, and labor-intensive to maintain. A lawn is down-and-out boring; nothing but a sea of green, or crunchy brown during a drought. The idea of ripping out a lawn and creating a panorama of color is enticing and, well...exciting. But there is one major flaw I can’t shake that keeps me from approving this type of landscaping.

When driving through neighborhoods, I occasionally glance to see homes with extensive garden displays in their front yards (or frontage). Is their backyard area well developed as well?

It has always perplexed me why some homeowners bedazzle passing drivers (or people walking past on sidewalks) with grand vistas of landscaped wonders, yet view that beauty only from the privacy of a few windows. What is the logical reason for doing this activity? Is it to impress passing eyes by hoping your home is in the running for being deemed as one of the “eight wonders of the world”? But is this beauty only for the driver/pedestrian's glancing sight?

What would happen if someone — like me, for example — were to drive into their driveway, ring the doorbell, and politely ask if they would not mind if I were to spend an hour walking around their front lawn to admire the roses, zinnias, and daylilies? I know the answer and results. I don't wish to become handcuffed by the police and be “the weird criminal of the day” on all the local television news outlets. *“A disturbed man terrorizes a local family by constantly walking about their front yard garden, admiring their flower displays. See the shocking video on Action News at Eleven.”*

Beautifying the front view of your home is essential, but a green lawn, trees, and shrubs outlining the house are always adequate. Yes, add some flower beds for some flair, but save the main attractions for the privacy of the backyard landscaped beauty.

I prefer to create personal displays in the backyard where I can relax on a recliner and enjoy the sights and sounds of my own “secret garden” — one that no one else can view except my eyes and those of the family. This area should be your retreat from the day-to-day hectic trials and tribulations of your workday, a place to envision when the 3:00 pm doldrums arise.

Wouldn't it be best if you saw this beauty up close and personal in the privacy of your own backyard? Save the small flower beds for visitors' front view while saving the grand displays for your eyes only in the privacy, security, and serenity of the backyard.

Specific Landscaping Mistakes To Encounter

From the beginning of your gardening adventure, you will eventually encounter the following specific problematic conditions. Without considering and immediately rectifying them, you suddenly realize you have made serious blunders sooner or later — most likely, later.

What begins as a minor problem can later become a laborious, expensive remedy. It's the solve-now-or-pay-later solution. Where shall we begin this exploration into common mistakes? *"Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start,"* (according to Rodgers & Hammerstein).

Landscape Mistake #7: Placing a landscape garden distant from a convenient watering source.



Alright, you are all set to begin a landscaping project. The site is determined, all environmental parameters seem adequate, so nothing can stop you now. Except...how do you plan to water your plants when the soil dries, and no rain is expected for some time? Constantly carry heavy buckets of water from your house? Unroll long, stiff hoses across the lawn...and later re-coil them haphazardly?

Nothing looks more tacky than water hoses criss-crossing the lawn. It does make lawn mowing rather challenging. How about installing an underground hose system from the house to a central location that is easily accessible to one or more garden beds?

This last idea is more ideal as a time saver, even though it requires more labor and expense. It is also more practical to install this watering system now, rather than much later, as you may have to revise your landscaping plans. I suggest having a professional service install this system, as they can use the latest methods to improve water delivery and ensure the required drainage from the hose or pipe before the ground freezes in winter.

But if you want a constant physical workout by lugging buckets of water, go for it. I guarantee it becomes harder (*ohh, my aching back!*) as you get older.

Landscape Mistake #8: Neglecting to consider adding decorative and entertaining elements to your gardens.



It's one thing to envision strolling about your beautiful landscaped paradise on many summer days, but how about developing a relaxing patio to sit a spell, entertain, or meditate while admiring the peacefulness of your creation?

Before the actual construction of your landscaped area begins, consider planning a simple patio setting, ideally not far from your house. It does not have to be overly complicated or expensive to establish. Even a small grassy area with a couple of lawn chairs near a large flower bed can be considered. But let's be more imaginative and daring. Now is the time to plan for a better future of relaxation.

Instead of placing a chair on the lawn, you could excavate an area and fill it with pea-sized gravel or stones, or insert interlocking paver blocks to form a stable, firm, and well-drained area for comfortable chairs or

benches. You may place your mini-patio elsewhere in the future, so I recommend avoiding the expense of pouring concrete. For a permanent placement, interlocking decorative pavers or bricks is preferred, especially if you wish to include larger additions such as a pergola or gazebo.

Two additional decorative features I recommend including in your future patio are a fountain and festive lighting. While you are installing water lines for your gardens, consider installing one in your proposed permanent patio area as well. Here, a fountain and a water garden, complete with koi and waterlilies, can also be installed.

While you are considering these additions, let's go a step further and also consider installing an electrical line extension from your house. This can power a larger fountain, a water-circulating pump for the water garden, and lighting features. Solar lights can also be used, but an electrical line can be a bonus for powering other devices that require more energy. It would be best to consult an electrician for proper and safe installation, but, in the long run, it will be worth the enjoyment of this heavenly area of contentment.

One final important recommendation is to document the placement and depth of the electrical and water lines for future reference. Don't rely on your memory of their locations. Also, be considerate of whoever will eventually live at your home if you ever decide to move or bequeath it in your will. Keep these placement details outlined on a paper and saved with your home's deed.

Landscape Mistake #9: Not determining where to dump “fresh” topsoil, mulch, and construction debris.



Alright, NOW you are all set to begin construction of your landscaping project. All plans and actions, including adequate water service delivery, have been considered and approved. Let's get digging!

Oh, wait. Hold your horses. Did you consider where to dump all that excess turf, rocks, and old nutrient-depleted soil from your excavation? And while we're at it... where are you going to dump all this refuse and the fresh topsoil to replenish what you just dug out? In your driveway? In the front lawn on large blue tarps? Right beside your neighbor's property? Your neighbor won't mind, will he?

Additionally, to further complicate this nagging problem, will large dump trucks be used to transport and deliver this material? Can a truck — from pickup size upward — drive into your backyard without

creating massive ruts and getting stuck? Are you physically able to shovel and haul these materials in a wheelbarrow?

Once again, time, labor, and expense have to be considered.

Landscape Mistake #10: Applying sheets of rubberized or polyethylene landscape fabric over the topsoil.

This is the most controversial mistake that many home gardeners, including professional landscape businesses, make before actually planting in the topsoil base. Fabrics are laid down over the completed soil additions and lot sculpturing. It has been used extensively over several years and is considered necessary for preventing soil water loss and weed seed germination. Not anymore.

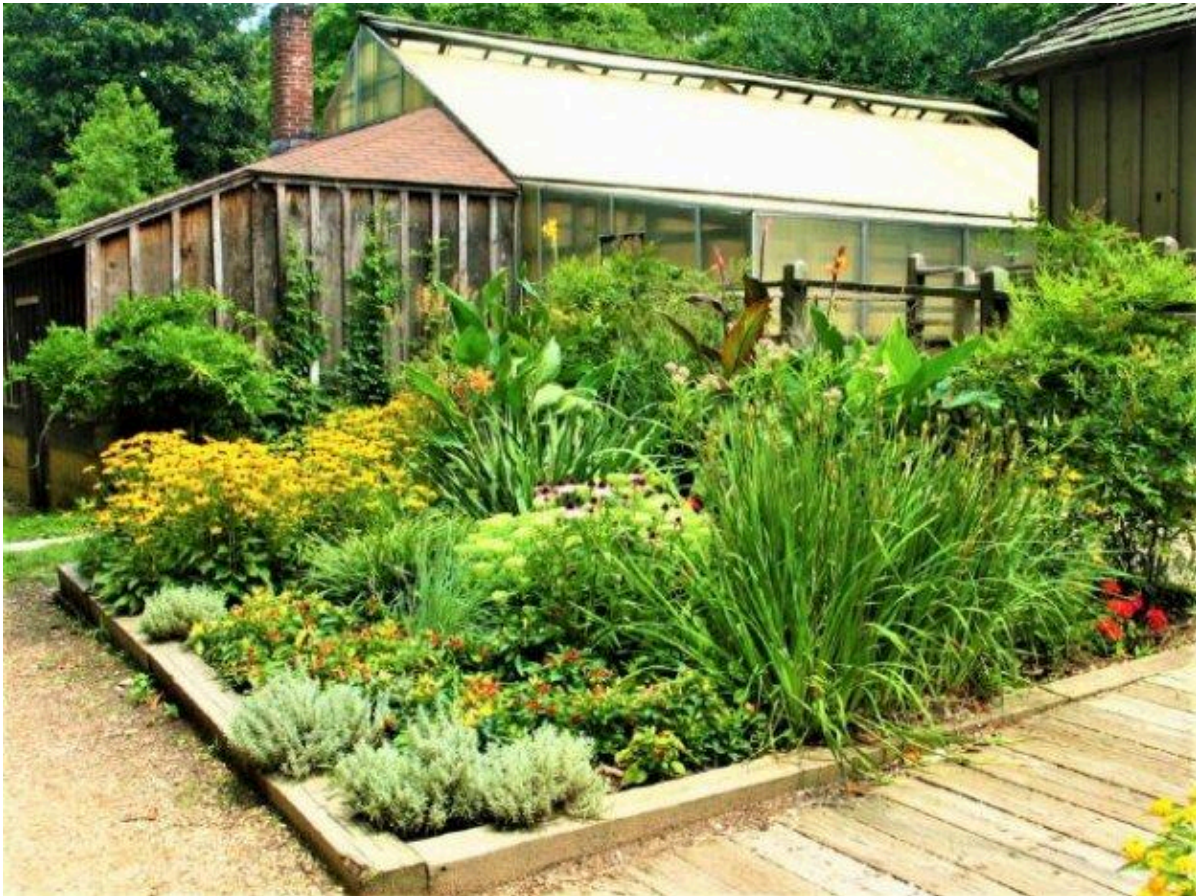
The problem (which has been extensively documented) is that these unnatural fabrics actually do more harm than good to the underlying soil structure, soil's bacteria and fungal biomass, and, eventually, to the inserted plants. You can't even plant spring and summer-blooming bulbs, since the fabric prevents them from emerging to the soil surface.

These covers prevent the exchange of essential oxygen and carbon dioxide in the soil, leading to the eventual death of beneficial bacteria, fungal life, and developing plant roots, all of which are vital for healthy plant growth. In many cases, the soil remains constantly wet, severely limiting extensive root development. The soil eventually "dies", causing the resulting sickly plants to die. Still, in many cases, the die-off can become noticeable within only a couple of years.

If sick plants (including trees and shrubs) are unsightly, consider the sight of improperly placed and exposed sheets by eroded mulching material (placed above the sheets and plants) is not a pretty sight in itself.

Please consider never using this material in your landscaping plans. But what about controlling water loss and weed growth? We will get to that in a few more sections. For now, we have to consider another great mistake, this time concerning the actual transplanting of plants into your newly created garden beds.

Landscape Mistake #11: Crowding plants together in your landscaped area.



I know the idea: the more, the merrier, in developing a landscape area teeming with blooming flowers in a short period of time. I also know the feeling of witnessing a massive die-off due to overcrowding. The plants can only grow upward, then flop over from their top weight or be smashed down by rain and wind. Many people assume it's the plant's fault — being diseased, malnourished, not getting enough water, or being attacked by animals or insects — and offer other possible excuses. A more common reason for plant fatalities in any bed or border is planting them too close together.

The planting “less-is-more” concept is advantageous for all plants, including most perennials, shrubs, and even groundcovers. Each plant has less direct competition for light, water, and nutrients. You could say they have room to breathe and stretch out their roots and stems.

Proper spacing of your young perennial or shrub plants when planting is necessary for their future survival. You must plan for your plant’s health over the next several months and years. Since you have constructed your landscape space with rich, well-drained soil, planting them too close together now will defeat the purpose of a later, thriving, healthy, and colorful display.

How do you determine how far to space your young plants? If you purchased them at a garden center, the identification label should list the mature height and spread for each perennial or shrub. This approximate mature spread distance is how close (or far) apart to plant them now. Another distance discovery alternative is to check online or in gardening books and catalogs. Yes, all beds, borders, and landscape designs will look horribly sparse now, but a quick remedy is rather easy — plant some colorful annuals.

Fast-growing and blooming annuals are ideal for “filling in” beds and borders planted mainly with perennials. Bear in mind that even annuals need some “breathing room” to grow and bloom well, but they can better adapt to closer planting. Whenever your plantings look sparse or bare, always add clumps of colorful annuals.

Landscape Mistake #12: Not considering the mature size of perennials and the length of time until blooming.

Here we enter the botanical equivalent of the space-time continuum — no astrophysics involved. For example, perennials will grow in all dimensions over a certain period of time. Blooming is delayed until a substantial root system is developed and enough top and side growth has formed. All this happens to unsuspecting gardeners who concentrate only on the pretty flowers shown on the identification labels.

Purchasing perennials should come with a document like the ones that list the side effects of any medication. Here, the warnings should read “...plants may grow taller under certain ideal growing conditions. Avoid planting with known smaller garden plants.” Well, not much can be written on one of those standard plastic identification labels. Still, fortunately, we do have plenty of written and digital information to learn from.

Many new gardeners don't realize that many hardy perennials take upwards of three years to reach their mature size. This also includes how far they spread outward — in a subtle reference to the above Mistake No. 11.

True Personal Case Study: Many years ago, I owned and operated a small plant nursery growing several perennials and annual bedding flowers. One of my pet peeves with customers was their constant worry that the plants would “grow too tall.” Any plant growing above three feet caused a wide-eyed, panicked look on their face. They considered taller growing annuals and perennials unappealing, in contrast to the “nice-and-short” flowers.

Another pet peeve, which always raised my blood pressure, was the all too common question of how long it takes for popular perennials to begin blooming, and how many blossoms they eventually produce. I explained that many perennials can take a couple of years or more, and when they do bloom, it's probably for less than a month. Their "deer-caught-in-headlights" stare and dropping jaw displayed their immense disapproval. I came to the conclusion that my impatient customers wanted all perennials to be like long-blooming annuals, and all annuals to be exceptionally hardy. I eventually gave up on offering any tall perennials.

Landscape Mistake #13: Planting aggressively growing perennials and shrubs.



There appears to be a monopoly on mistakes when planting perennial plants. I guess one more warning won't hurt; in fact, this one is very important. Here, we all need to learn which perennial plants (including groundcovers) to avoid in all garden landscapes. Well...maybe you could use them in those difficult planting areas...but only if these aggressive plants don't spread outward in the wild or inward toward your house. Anyway, learn to identify "them" in garden centers and nurseries. You could also ask a knowledgeable nursery worker about the ones you're interested in but unsure about.

Now, why not grow them? They can fill in an area really quickly. Reasonably, that would not be bad, but... unforeseen problems arise in a short period of time.

True Personal Case Study #1: What is not to like with an evergreen groundcover plant such as English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)? Well, I can think of plenty of reasons to avoid it. Is our common ivy listed as a not-to-grow vine for landscaping? Say it isn't so! Well, at least for me, and for other people, yes, it is so.

Let's learn a few facts before I explain my "beef" about it. This evergreen plant is native to northern Europe, Russia, and Scandinavia, making it very hardy in zones 3 to 9. It can grow in full sun to shade in practically any soil. It can cover the ground and is a familiar sight growing on house stone walls and encasing tree trunks. It can do this by using aerial rootlets that secrete a "glue-substance" that sticks tightly to a structure.

Okay, based on these fun facts, let's get to the heart of the "do-not-grow" matter. It's self-clinging, fast-growing, and capable of causing severe damage to house structures. It also hides potentially dangerous problems, such as deep holes and power cables, and is prime real estate for unwelcome pests. I will tell you more about that shortly. And, for personal observation, it is ugly, especially when covering vast stretches of ground and tree trunks.

Some areas here in the United States view this vine as an invasive weed. The state of Oregon bans its sale because it overruns forests. For an example of such a feat of uncontrollable growth, refer back to the cover photo of this publication. I am not sure of its location, but I am glad I don't have to untangle this mess.

From these facts, I should have known better than to purchase several flats of potted vines. The character of Grissom in the now-old TV show "CSI" correctly stated, "*The best intentions are fraught with disappointment.*" There is also an old proverb, "*the road to hell is paved with good intentions.*" With these two statements in mind, here are two

tales of growing this uncontrollable vine and a popular perennial called Hosta.

Once upon a time, after construction of my new house, I planted English Ivy around the foundation and my newly planted shrubs. Reference books recommend it as a quick, easy groundcover for controlling weeds and covering unsightly areas. I mistakenly thought it would “behave itself,” and I could manage it.

At first, yes, it looked great filling in the area. But after two years, unforeseen problems developed. The vines grew tired of growing horizontally and decided to climb vertically into the shrubs and the house's vinyl siding. I was continually pulling down vines all summer!

The mat of vines on the ground provided the perfect, cool, dark habitat for sowbugs, beetles, and other mini-beasts. Often mistaken for insects, sowbugs (also called Woodlice, Pillbugs, and Rolly-Pollies in many areas) are related to crayfish and lobsters.

I had millions of these miniature translucent lobsters scurrying around, their tiny legs beneath the extensive forest of ivy leaves and stems. To make matters worse, they attracted nightmarish, ravenous packs of wolf spiders, then field mice, and, eventually, garter and black snakes. Where the hell did all these creatures come from?

My house is located near a grassy field harvested for making hay by a neighboring farmer. It was as if the house had a flashing neon sign advertising 24-hour free buffet dining for carnivorous beasts. It was only a matter of time before busloads of raccoons, foxes, and coyotes would arrive for snake meals. I am not exaggerating here.

I had created a perfect storm of food-chain pests outside my door and inside my vinyl siding. NO MORE! So, during the following winter, when all the creepy-crawlies and slithering beasties were dormant and in hiding (somewhere—which sparked another round of panic in guessing where they were lurking), I ripped the vines out with enthusiasm and replaced them with a thick layer of pea-sized gravel.

True Personal Case Study 1.2: If I lived in the desert, this extensive area of gravel would look ideal, but the entire house appeared embarrassingly naked. I needed plants, preferably perennials, that were hardy, easy to care for, and added color. I decided to plant variegated green-and-yellow Hostas around the house. What can go wrong with planting Hostas? Plenty, I am afraid.

They looked gorgeous for a few short years. Unfortunately, with unbridled leafy ecstasy, they produce humongous canopies of overlapping and overcrowded leaves. The gravel became less noticeable while my old nemesis of marauding creepy-crawlies became, once again, more noticeable.

One additional star performer of this convention of micro-beasts was the slug. I never encountered them before, but these gooey, slimy, and squishy bare-naked snails covered the leaves. They may have hitchhiked with a plant or two or laid their eggs in the potting soil. No matter, for here, they thrived, and I needed them to die.

There are two awful feelings in life. The first is walking face-first into a massive spider's web—complete with an attached arachnid, and the second is accidentally squishing slugs with our fingers. Ribbons of slime cover your hand. Excuse me while I experience a “dry-heaves” gag response moment from typing these sentences.

Okay, there, I'm fine now. I would further describe the slimy element of slugs, but I think you understand why I hate these creatures. It was the recommendation of a garden center helper to apply something to my Hostas to halt the advancement of these gluttonous nude-frolicking mollusks.

The control is periodic applications of pellets containing copper. Sprinkling the granules on the soil around each plant should make the slimy beasts sick to their stomach and perish within a few days. To my amazement, the poison worked. As with any alien species introduced from another country, region, or planet, once you have them, a few lucky individuals will survive to repopulate and plague you some other day.

Over a few years, the Hosta plants looked dreadful by becoming overgrown, weather-beaten, and chewed relentlessly by returning slugs. Upon reflection of this unsatisfactory mess, I tried to dig them out. Think of mature Hosta plants as icebergs; the top growth does not reflect what lies underneath. Their thick, white roots extend everywhere, intermingling and weaving with other Hostas, so any attempt to dig them up is futile.

If you have a handy-dandy backhoe parked in your garage (don't you have one? Neither do I), it would be great to scoop out these types of perennials. Daylilies also come to mind when trying to dig and separate sections. You need suitable earth excavating machines to do the job quickly. If using the standard procedures of a simple spade or shovel, the digging would take weeks — if your backbone remains intact.

You can rent backhoes from larger hardware stores — and a person to operate one — but both can be expensive. Forget that plan. So, the next idea was to use “the nuclear option,” something I sometimes have to do with massive weed build-up around my home. That weapon of mass botanical destruction is using an herbicide.

I sprayed herbicide on the overgrown Hosta plants in late summer. Yes, I read the lengthy warning label and made sure not to spray the lawn— or myself—accidentally. I hesitated to do this, though. I felt like a mass murderer, premeditated, calculating, and downright sinister. If arrested and brought before a judge, I would plead innocent on the grounds of temporary insanity (although my neighbors would testify to it being a full-time craziness). My defense response would be, “*Your Honor, the slugs made me do it.*” The way some judges (and juries) determine a verdict these days, I think they would acquit me.

Anyway, the Hostas were dead by fall, and I ripped the brown leaves out and off the ground. This action created a sensation with my neighbors. Their bewildered amazement sparked panicky questions that usually began with, “*What the hell happened here...?*” I repeatedly explained my reasons and reassured them that my psychological profile was still

safely intact (although they must have had doubts—even long before this time).

The Great Hosta Die-Off debacle eventually subsided when winter arrived, and snow later covered the crime scene. I had a few months (which always feels like years) of cold and snow to plan my next neighborhood talking event. This time, it involved what to plant on the new border.

While researching library books and online forums, I abandoned age-old advice and forgot to plant larger perennials in the post-Hosta die-off areas bordering the house. Instead, I focused on fast-growing, long-blooming annuals.

I became interested in growing only colorful annuals (and enjoying them). Instead of planting a continuous bed of them, which would repeat my past horrors of inviting the creepy-crawlers, I planted a patch here and there, like colorful islands in a sea of gravel. My best “creations” were disease-resistant, mixed-color, dwarf zinnias and French marigolds. The border caught the wide-eyed envy of my neighbors, hummingbirds, and butterflies. My other enjoyment was that no slugs were in sight or on hand. My catharsis was complete.

I have greater respect for planting more annuals in any garden. I grew many from seed or sprinkled them in the soil — even if covered by a layer of gravel. Here, the seeds can sift downward between the rocky grains and still germinate. The only problem is massive self-seeding, which appears the following spring as a plethora of young growth over the gravel bed. Yes, that would send up distress flares on a repeat, scary performance, but reason prevailed. Well, a few minutes of hoeing solved that problem in an instant, and the annuals still had islands of blooming by late spring and throughout the summer.

Congratulations on reading those lengthy invasive plant confessions; they demonstrate the need to prevent the spread of certain plants in a landscaped area. For additional nasty plants to avoid in your landscaping projects, please refer to my free PDF ebook, *Invasive*

Flower Garden Plants: Something Unwanted This Way Grows, for informative and entertaining reference.

Landscape Mistake #14: Neglecting to apply mulch and using the wrong type.



Once you insert your various plants into your well-made landscape beds, you do need to blanket everything with a generous layer of organic mulch. Otherwise, weed seeds like grass, dandelions, thistles, and other unwanted plants will overtake all your hard work. Organic mulches not only prevent soil compaction but also help retain soil moisture, allow rapid absorption of rain, help cool the soil during the summer, and, most importantly, encourage a healthy biotic structure for the underlying soil.

Before delving into what type of “good” mulch to apply, if you overlooked **Landscape Mistake No. 10**, let me briefly recap: Do not

apply the “bad” rubberized or polyethylene landscape fabrics! Go back and read this section.

To further emphasize not to add this type of material, some similar mulching material is sold not as stretchy tarp-like sheets, but sold in bags as “chunky, small, black, brick nuggets”. This, in my opinion, is absolutely hideous mulching material advertised as being “permanent” for flower beds, borders, and mounding around trees and shrubs. Made of oil-based, solidified tar material, it’s hyped as a labor-saving, cost-saving, non-decaying alternative to the always-rotting, always-need-replacing natural bark mulches. This material gives the label of being “artificial” a really bad reputation. Case in point:

True Personal Case Study #1: I once (literally once — for a reason described soon) helped a neighbor, a senior couple, mow their lawn because the husband was unable to do so after surgery. His wife is a perfectionist and kept barking orders and complaints at me as I mowed. I had to shut off the lawnmower repeatedly to hear what she was harping about. *“You missed that spot! Do it again!”* she repeatedly pointed and shouted. So, I obeyed, reluctantly.

Then, the “mulch incident” happened. Her husband had, at some point, applied a thick conical mound of those hard, inorganic, oil-based mini-bricks around the base of their trees. As I tried to avoid hitting those chunks, the mower blade struck one — *Kaapowwww!* — and flung it like a missile toward their house. The wife had a meltdown and screamed at me. *“DON’T HIT THOSE THINGS!”* I told her I could not help it. So, I gave those “tar mulch nuggets from Hell” a wide berth and continued to mow. She yelled at me again because I left tall grass standing near the tree and around those mulch bricks. I replied in a stressed but firm voice that I could not cut the grass by the tree because of those things. She stormed into the house and later came back out holding a pair of scissors. I was told — no, Marine drill sergeant ordered — to sit on the ground and trim off the grass blades...from around each tree. That was the last straw, and I shut off their mower and left for home.

Needless to say, I was not the only one who was “tongue-lashed” at. Some other poor soul who later took over my job repeatedly blade-hit those mulch bricks (plenty of *Kaapowww* sounds then) and apparently encountered the spite and verbal wrath of my neighbor’s wife.

To make this story mercifully end for you, those black nugget things were eventually replaced a few weeks later with a conical mound of small bark-chip mulch. Well, gee whiz, I wonder what prompted that action?

Over the years, many landscape businesses have offered a wide range of mulch to gardeners. There can be many types—such as well-rotted compost, shredded tree bark, and decaying wood chips and leaves. Mulches can provide adequate weed control, but only to a point. Ironically, they also add an additional layer of organic material for weed seeds to germinate and grow on.

Be sure to identify the type of mulch, as not-so-honest mulch makers can sell materials unsuited for garden use. Here are two additional true stories about what happens when cheap mulch is not a bargain but a curse.

True Personal Case Study #2: I know someone giddy with glee over purchasing a few tons of cheap mulch. He told me, “I got a bargain purchasing all this mulch! I will spread this stuff on all the flower beds. Goodbye, weeds!”

Two weeks later, he was heartbroken and depressed because all his plants had died — including some weeds... for a while. “I don’t understand it. The plants were healthy, but they soon wilted and died. Can you look at them and see what killed them?”

I did so and was horrified to discover his cheap mulch being shredded, old railroad ties. The railroad companies treat these wooden ties with coal-tar creosote as a preservative to prevent decay. This petroleum-based chemical has a horrible smell and is highly toxic to most plants and animals. He later told me, *“That stuff sure stunk, but I thought mulch*

was like that.” He eventually hired a landscaping company to rid all his beds of this toxic mess and contaminated topsoil. They then replaced his beds with “fresh” material. *“My cheap mulch cost me a fortune!”* he later told me.

The moral of this sad tale is to ask landscapers what type of mulch they use.

While you’re at it, ask if the much is pasteurized. Yes, you read that correctly. Pasteurization involves applying heat to kill harmful bacteria and mold spores. We mainly performed this act for dairy products, but also for pest-free, disease-free, and weed-free mulch. At least this stuff does not have an expiration or sell-by date. You can tell if a mulch is becoming pasteurized if you see mountains of it steaming on a frosty morning. Most mulch-making companies allow huge mounds of woody material to heat via decomposition over several months.

As a newbie gardener, you are probably asking yourself, *“Why all this fuss over something as simple as decaying wood chips and fiber?”* As it did me, the answer will shock you and is explained in more detail next.

True Personal Case Study #3: As for the subject of why not use fresh mulch or recently chopped woody material, avoid it as if your life depended on it. Why? Because of the dreaded **Artillery Fungus** (*Sphaerobolus stellatus*) — yes, I kid you not. This case study involves what happened to me and continues to occur years afterward.

A few years ago, I desperately needed to purchase some wood-chip mulch to control an entire battalion of hard-to-conquer weeds surrounding the perimeter of my new house. My earlier attempt at using pea-size gravel worked for a while, but it slowly worked its way into the underlying soil. I decided to use wood chip material now. After a lengthy search for the best buy in my immediate area, I settled on the cheapest wood chip-based mulch available. Hey, it’s only chopped-up trees. It should be cheap.

After applying this mulch, everything looked great for a few months until millions of tiny black spots developed all over the house’s white

vinyl siding after a wet early summer. I seriously believed all those countless spots were from an overabundance of fly droppings! Yes, that was not a pretty thought.

I sprayed down the house with one of those liquid-soap washing canisters attached to a garden hose, but the mysterious spots remained. A few days later, a local TV newscast reported problems some people were experiencing with white or pale-colored house siding and cars covered with millions of tiny black spots.

The vandalizing culprit is the Artillery Fungus that lives in unpasteurized mulch. Those spots are masses of spores shot up into the cool, moist night air. This fungus prefers to aim its spores at white or bright, moonlit objects (such as white vinyl siding or cars parked near a mulch-covered flower bed) and blast them with its super-sticky spores. Honest-to-goodness, this is true!

If you have the time to analyze the molecular structure of the sticky goo from these spores, you have the makings of becoming the next mega-billionaire glue manufacturer. That damn stuff does not come off vinyl siding or cars!

When visitors look at the house siding, they stare and inquire about its unusual texture. I always reply that it is my “salt and pepper” vinyl siding (with a thick application of pepper). Years later — and I do mean years later — most of the spots have worn off, but some remain. For future reference, power-wash your house siding with a siding-cleaning solution every other year.

Please, make sure your garden mulch is “pasteurized” to destroy this type of fungus, harmful bacteria, and viral agents that will ruin your plantings and, incredible to comprehend, your house and possibly your car. What is at most risk is your mental health.

Many professional landscapers and garden center workers recommend applying composted bark or pasteurized small wood chips as a safe and effective weed barrier. These natural materials eventually decompose

but add necessary nutrients to the underlying soil, which are ready for plant absorption.

Not only that, but unlike the above oil-based, tarry sheet-based mulch material, composted bark allows for important gas exchange between the air and the soil. It also provides a great home for earthworms and soil microorganisms. Whatever you decide on for mulch, make sure it is biodegradable (wood chips, bark, shredded leaves, coconut fiber, cardboard, and others), pasteurized, and readily available nearby for easier placement.

Landscape Mistake #15: Forgetting to permanently label the varietal names of your plants for future reference.

You may not realize it at the time of planting, but throwing away those garden center or nursery plant name labels will come back to haunt you sometime in the future. Let's face it — we all do this and later overload our brain cells into remembering what those beautiful flowers or that yummy tomato's name is.

Even if you do save those labels and insert them near the plants into the mulch, they have that magical abra-ca-dabra ability to disappear within a period of time. Who knows how that happens, and where do they go?

Anyway, try making new waterproof identification labels for your plants that can be inserted deeply into the mulch and underlying soil. Another idea is for you to create a gardening journal — in a paper notebook or on a tablet — and begin taking notes on the plants in your garden beds and exactly where they are located.

You can even take photos of your plants (with their labels) with your cell phone for future reference. Maybe these actions sound “funny” or ridiculous, but I guarantee you that someday this information will be valuable, so you can repurchase those ideal plants again.

Landscape Mistake #16: Applying too much commercial fertilizer or the wrong percentage of essential nutrients.

This is a common mistake for everyone, often with fatal results for our plants. We kill them with kindness, which, ironically, is better than killing them with total neglect.

Bagged commercial dry fertilizer is actually a mixture of elemental salts, which need water to dissolve into their constituent nutrients. These are nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Think of applying fertilizer like a restaurant chef salting food. A sprinkle of salt (or, especially, pepper) improves its flavor, while throwing in a handful makes it inedible.

For fertilizing garden plants, it is best to err on the side of applying too little rather than too much. If you think about it — based on Mother Nature's methodology — most plants receive extra fertilization only from thunderstorm rain, hailstones, and winter snow. Most nutrients are recycled through the actions of microorganisms, earthworms, animal droppings, and through the decomposition of both plants and animals.

Each of those essential nutrients plays a significant role in healthy plant growth. Phosphorus is necessary for the plant's metabolic functions, ranging from energy transformations, cell growth regulation, and stem, root, flower, seed, and fruit development. A lack of this element can significantly affect a plant's overall growth and development. Strangely, phosphorus is not readily available to plants because it bonds easily (and quickly) with other elements and cannot be readily absorbed into a plant. Fortunately, what is available to plants comes from biochemical transformations carried out by soil bacteria and fungi. Hooray for these little helpers!

Potassium is another vital nutrient, as it undergoes numerous chemical transformations that are vital for plant growth and health. A few surprising benefits of this element involve water and sugar conductivity within the plant's tissues, and help regulate water loss to prevent excessive dehydration. A lack of potassium in the soil results in premature leaf yellowing and browning, weak stems, and prolonged wilting even when the soil is moist.

Finally, we have nitrogen, the most misunderstood of these vital elements. Why do we have a problem with it? Well, being a nutrient, we assume the more we give it to a plant (as in, force-feeding), the greener its leaves will be, and the quicker and more luxuriant its vegetative growth. Yes, these assumptions are true, but they may not be beneficial for most plants. Too much nitrogen will cause plants to produce excessive leaf and weakened stem growth at the expense of flower, seed, and fruit development.

All these elements, when applied abundantly, always result in excessive soil contamination and eventually in water runoff into streams and rivers. This is a constant environmental problem in agricultural areas.

For the best growth and blooming of your garden plants, be it flowers, fruits, or vegetables, go easy on applications of commercial inorganic fertilizers. If fertilizing with them, apply only in the spring when growth resumes, or in the fall when the plants begin dormancy. This allows plants (and microorganisms) time to fully absorb these nutrients into their tissues, making them available for the next season's growth and blooming.

As always recommended, the absolute best fertilizers are organic waste products such as heated compost and composted manure. The heated (pasteurized) process helps kill weed seeds, harmful plant microorganisms, and insects.

Landscape Mistake #17: Confusion over the usage and application of herbicides and pesticides.

Gardening comes with all sorts of inherent problems. Everything is either taking over your flower beds or trying to eat everything you have planted and nurtured. You need to find solutions to these problems that do not involve accidentally killing your plants, and most importantly, not harming yourself.

Most of us would rather use “organic” or natural methods of pest control or management. Sometimes, the problem becomes too complex to manage, so the “botanical nuclear option” may have to be implemented. Above all else, you need to learn how to read (and comprehend) the instructions and warnings on all insecticide and herbicide containers.

Personal Case Study: Years ago, at my parents’ house, a close neighbor spread several bags of granular herbicide on the soil where many invasive multiflora roses grew on his immediate proximity property. The problem was that some of the dense rose bushes also grew near my father’s four beautiful, thirty-foot-tall spruce trees. Later, the roses died; by the following year, the trees had died as well. He apologized for his action, explaining to my dad, *“The bag said it would kill the roses, but I did not read the warning of what else it would kill.”* How sad. All it would have taken him was to read the entire application and warning label on each bag.

With urgent warnings about declining honey bee (and other bee species) populations worldwide, we need to be extra careful when applying any insecticide. Most are “DIE-BUG-DIE!” multipurpose chemicals and should be used sparingly and with utmost care to avoid self-contamination. I recommend avoiding systemic insecticides (which are absorbed by plants) and residual chemicals that persist on plants for a long time. Another type of insecticide to avoid contains Bifenthrin.

This potent chemical is highly dangerous to important insects such as bees and butterflies, as well as to fish, birds, and ourselves.

If you need to spray for insect pests, I suggest starting with products containing Permethrin, an insecticide derived from certain species of Chrysanthemum. Yes, they are still lethal for all insects, but here Mother Nature has developed her own type of control.

Another simple method to control small insects and even fungal diseases is applying a soapy water spray — but only on cloudy days or in the evening after the sun sets. Sunlight can cause the soap to “burn” or kill the leaves and flowers. Leave the soapy residue on the plant for a few minutes, then wash it off with a garden hose.

When using herbicides, please don't confuse the terms broadleaf dicot and grassy monocot applications. Somehow, in the history of ancient plant chemistry, these two types of plants can be controlled with herbicides specific to one but not the other. Please don't confuse which herbicide to use on the weeds to control or eliminate them. To make life easier for everyone, many herbicides today are equal opportunity plant destroyers.

As usual, treat all “bug and weed-cides” as highly toxic solutions. Always follow the directions on concentration and application procedures. Adding too much and applying it over time will not only eventually kill surrounding valuable plants but also be absorbed and concentrated into the food chain. Not good for anything and anybody.

Landscape Mistake #18: Planting conflicts beside neighboring properties.



The above Personal Case Study example of how a neighbor applied concentrated granular herbicide on his property, but the toxic effects also destroyed my father's nearby trees, highlights what can go wrong with landscaping near property boundaries. That drastic mistake could have resulted in a lawsuit, but my father, not only being very "pissed-off", chalked it up as a classic stupid mistake — caused by his not-too-bright neighbor for not reading or understanding the repercussions of where not to apply that herbicide.

There are other ways to cause neighbor conflicts, such as planting a row (or rows, depending on the property lines) of problematic plants. The adage of "good fences make good neighbors" can, and does, have

limits to that concept. It might appear better to erect the age-old white picket fences to separate neighboring territories. Still, disagreements can erupt there over who would mow the grass between the posts.

Most problems occur when invasive plants are used as border identifiers. Some plants, like a row of bamboo (shown above), develop massive, extending underground shoots that can pop up a jungle of new top growth well into the neighbor's lawn.

Overextending shrubs and trees, especially those difficult to trim or cut back, will also eventually lead to heated words and possible legal issues. Excessively thorny and prickly roses, although beautiful for a few weeks, are always painfully troublesome. Some plantings, such as long rows of tall or bushy ornamental grasses, can become fire hazards when the top growth dies in the fall. I know, these examples may appear far-fetched, but the results can happen.

It is best to discuss with a neighbor whether to plan a border planting, negotiate what to plant, and coordinate maintenance to prevent excessive growth. Better yet, don't plant anything. Select a couple of landmarks and connect them with an invisible dividing line. This is what my neighbor and I do: connect a sight line between an electric line pole we share and the other end, a large rock serving as a boundary survey point. When mowing the lawn, whoever mows first cuts along this invisible connecting line. The grass is mowed without any complaints. Forget the border fences and plantings; only cultivate friendly relations with your neighbors.

Landscape Mistake #19: Neglecting to prune or remove “spent” flowers and seedheads.

Although considered part of your regular maintenance regime, this particular chore is the most overlooked throughout the entire growing season and afterward into fall and winter. Spent flowers are establishing ripened seeds of the next generation. Seed development consumes plenty of energy that could be used to establish new blossoms, and, except for annual plants, aids in storing more vital energy to survive the coming winter and begin new growth in the spring.

The spent flowers will eventually self-seed, leading to an abundance of unwanted seedlings that will cover your beds and borders, even if mulched. In general, spent flowers look unkempt and disarrayed, disrupting the overall beauty of the landscaping. No matter what type of plant, an occasional weekly or semi-weekly trimming will encourage more new growth and blossoms. Roses are prime subjects for regular pruning of spent flowers and dead or dying stems or branches.

All the tools needed for pruning are a pair of garden gloves and sharp shears to snip off spent blossoms. Yes, there is labor and time involved, but performing this act encourages new flower development, a fuller blooming look to the plants, and peace of mind knowing you are in charge of making your beds and borders as attractive as possible.

While pruning or snipping off spent flowers and damaged or dead branches, please don't allow those trimmings to accumulate on the ground. This may seem like a great way to naturally recycle these older plant parts, but this refuse can provide a breeding ground for fungal spores and other undesirable plant diseases. A trash bag is a gardener's best defense in controlling “plant litter”. I guess you are officially a janitor for your landscaped garden.

Landscape Mistake #20: Neglecting to stand back and actually enjoy what you have accomplished.



Mistakes were encountered, but you persevered in correcting them. Your muscles may have ached aplenty, and your mind may have occasionally “snapped”, but better days and circumstances prevailed. Eventually, your landscaped paradise will be completed, and the only remaining, but no less difficult to endure, action is to exercise patience as you wait for all the blooming to begin.

We may feel some dissatisfaction when doing something we really enjoy. We always feel the need to improve upon our well-earned present accomplishments. Athletes constantly need to improve their bodies; an artist, a musician, or a writer strives to create the next great

masterpiece. Are our actions “good enough now” to stop, or should we strive to make continuous “improvements”?

Gardening is no different. It is an ongoing activity of constant mathematical improvements. We always add plants, subtract others, multiply the ones we admire, and divide some to share with friends. We calculate the number of plants to include in a measured plot, the percentage of a fixed budget for purchasing new plants, and the cubic volumes of topsoil or compost required.

There has to be a time when we need to, by interjecting a time-worn phrase, “stop and smell the roses.” We need to temporarily scale back constant improvements and enjoy what has been accomplished. Is it pride, vanity, and gloating about what we achieve? Well, so be it. Take the time to pat yourself on the back and say out loud, *“I did a great job in improving my life and home with this massive undertaking!”* Go ahead and toot your horn, for rarely will other people do it for you.

It’s your home, your gardens, your accomplishments, and your well-earned enjoyment. What better way to experience the beauty and joy life offers than by encouraging and maintaining a once-naked plot of land to thrive with countless petals of vibrant color?

Conclusion

If you have made it here and are still considering undertaking a landscaping project for your home, I sincerely thank you for your determination and interest in discovering the several pitfalls of such an endeavor.

My intention with this publication was not to scare you into abandoning your plan to add flower beds to your home. It was to alert you to potential troubling issues. In my usual pessimistic outlook (for I am a professional worrywart), if something can go wrong, it will when you least expect it.

As usual, when I arrive at the conclusion sections of my ebooks, I fear that I have neglected or overlooked information that, in hindsight, should have been included. This ebook is no exception. I am sure there are more landscaping problems, large and small, that should have been reviewed and recognized. Sorry to say, you may encounter them.

Most of the above-mentioned mistakes are commonplace but arise from anticipation and excitement about beginning such a creative activity. It's not until later that certain construction procedures reveal complications that weren't anticipated or realized early on.

The above mistake list is not complete, for any decision in design, execution of labor and planting (including what to actually plant), and later maintenance will surely unearth other problems. Hopefully, they are minor and can be easily solved without too much anxiety and worry.

No matter what we do, something will always interfere with our actions and planned results. Gardening is no different. But at least it's a free-choice issue that can and will eventually reward us with beauty and peace of mind — whatever is left of it after tackling all the problems in creating that parcel of paradise.

Thank you for reading this ebook

I hope this publication has enlightened you to some potential problems you may encounter when developing and planting large flower beds, house borders, or outer land areas.

Please visit my author website at <https://gedwinvarner.com> for my other gardening ebooks and contact information.

About the Author

G. Edwin Varner grew up on a farm, helping his father in the crop fields and assisting his mother in the flower and vegetable gardens. This experience and learning led him to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in Botany.

He successfully owned and operated a fragrant flower mail-order nursery for twenty years. Unlike most mail-order nurseries publishing colorful but expensive pictorial catalogs, his frugal catalog extensively described the flowers he grew. He once said, *"I write a thousand words worth a picture in my catalogs."* Today, he has the same style of writing (thankfully with fewer words) through a variety of enjoyable and informative ebooks. This time, the ebooks include color photos of each flower.

He encourages you to cultivate something unique and beautiful in your gardens. His motto is "Read about it, see it, grow it and enjoy it!"

G. Edwin Varner lives in a rural area of northeastern Ohio, USA.

Read more at [G. Edwin Varner's site](#).