Creating a Florida Yard

Functions of a Front Yard

1. The yard is a setting or a foreground for viewing the house. Creates curb appeal.
2. Acts as a public area for arrival and entry into the house.

Typical Problems Associated with a Front Yard

1. Driveway is dominant.
2. Lawn area covers majority of yard – requires more weekly maintenance. Traditional acceptance of outdoor standards.
3. Garage door is prominent.
4. Sidewalk is narrow, typically only 3 feet in width, forcing people to walk single file.
5. Hidden sidewalks, so people make their own path.
6. Front stoop is too small.
7. Limited planted beds, many with outdated or overused plant materials. Example: 3 Queen Palms, 3 Selloumes and some Liriope.
8. Trees and shrubs randomly placed creating a “plop and drop” look.
9. Plants are not in scale with the house.
10. Messy and “dirty” trees over driveways and sidewalks.
11. Lacks memorable image or style – get a cookie cutter look.

Functions of a Side Yard

1. Serves as a pathway to move foot traffic through the front and back yards.
2. Often used for sheds, trash cans and compost bins.
Typical Problems Associated with a Side Yard

1. Some tend to be dark and humid – lack of sun and wind.
2. Poor accessibility from inside the house.
4. Often totally enclosed with no view.
5. Weak relationship with interior of house.
6. Sheds and storage areas can be unsightly.
7. Narrow and difficult to maintain.
8. On the north side of a house, too shady for healthy turfgrass.

Functions of a Backyard

1. Used for outdoor living and entertaining.
2. Serves a need for recreation areas.
3. Provides a place for utilitarian activities. Example - vegetable gardening, storage, etc.

Typical Problems Associated with a Backyard

1. Patios and terraces are too small for outdoor entertaining.
2. Weak relationship with interior of house.
3. Only one entry method to a backyard, must be used for foot traffic and limits area for other uses.
4. Unacceptable views of neighbors yards and houses.

Outdoor Rooms

Create outdoor living spaces by using the yard as an extension of the related indoor room.

1. Use entry walk to front door as an outdoor foyer related to the indoor foyer.
2. Use a patio area as an outdoor entertaining area and an extension of kitchen/dining area.
3. Use a small private courtyard as an addition to a master bedroom or master bath.
4. A quiet reflective/reading area can mimic a den or study.

Five Common Mistakes in Landscape Planting

Mistake #1: Over-planting.
Small trees and shrubs are often planted too close together to get a “full” look. The result several years later is a crowded landscape. Plants must be removed or drastically pruned to reduce competition.

Solution #1: Resist the temptation to have an “instant landscape.” Know the mature size of plants and give them room – and time – to grow.

Mistake #2: Lawn areas are cluttered with trees and shrubs.
Plants scattered throughout the lawn appear unorganized. They also create maintenance problems in terms of mowing, raking and giving plants the amount of water and fertilizer they need.

Solution #2: Group shrubs and trees in mulched plant beds bordering the lawn.
Mistake #3: Shrubs around the home are too tall.
When plants grow too tall, they cover windows and no longer enhance the home’s appearance. We usually try to compensate for this “mis-planting” by shearing to control the plant size. This constant shearing weakens and disfigures shrubs. It also creates extra work and yard wastes.

Solution #3: Select foundation plants with an ultimate (mature) size that fits their location. Instead of shearing shrubs, selectively clip stray shoots to keep the plant neat and full.

Mistake #4: Plants are planted too close to the house.
Plants too close to the house have an unattractive “cramped” look. They also create a maintenance nightmare when it’s time to repair or paint the house.

Solution #4: Foundation or corner shrubs should be planted half their mature width plus one foot away from the wall. Therefore, a shrub that will grow to be five feet wide should be planted 3½ (2½ + 1) feet away from the house.

Mistake #5: Bright colors are scattered throughout the yard.
Brightly colored foliage, flowers or fruit attract attention. When brilliant color is scattered along the foundation of elsewhere around the yard, it confuses and may overwhelm the viewer.

Solution #5: Concentrate color where accent is desired. The goal is to attract attention to focal areas of the house.