

# **Creating a Home Landscape You Can Love & Enjoy**

## **Sustainable Landscape Design Basics for Homeowners Workshop**

### **University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum**

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December 14, 2016

Re: Creating a Home Landscape You Can Love & Enjoy (4-session workshop)  
January 7 & 21 and February 3 & 18, 2017; 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.  
University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, Marion Andrus Learning Center  
3675 Arboretum Boulevard (Hwy. 5), Chaska, MN 55318

Dear Sustainable Landscape Design Basics for Homeowners Workshop Attendee:

Greetings and welcome to the Creating a Home Landscape You Can Love & Enjoy: Sustainable Landscape Design Basics for Homeowners Workshop sponsored by the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. It's hard to believe a new year is nearly upon us and the workshop begins in just a few short weeks. And even though it's the middle of winter and the beginning of what is typically the coldest time of the year, the days will soon be getting longer and spring, and a new gardening season, will be here before we know it. Without a doubt, it's time to start thinking ahead to the warmer days to come and making plans for improvements to the outdoor living spaces in your landscape. Beginning on January 7, we look forward to introducing you to the basic principles of sustainable landscape design and to helping you get your creative juices flowing as you contemplate the exciting possibilities for your home landscape in preparation for the 2017 growing season.

Each workshop session will consist of lecture and discussion and later sessions will also include critiques and some hands-on lab time to work on your designs and ask questions. All four workshop sessions will be held in the Marion Andrus Learning Center. Parking is available across the driveway to the north of the building. Directions to the Arboretum and additional information about the Arboretum, including a map of the grounds, are available at the arboretum website at <http://www.arboretum.umn.edu/default.aspx>.

### **Sustainable Urban Landscape Information Series (SULIS) Website**

The Sustainable Urban Landscape Information Series (SULIS) website will be a useful reference as you work on your designs. SULIS is part of the University of Minnesota Extension Garden website which can be found at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/>. We will introduce the SULIS website at the first workshop session on January 7, but we encourage you to visit the website before then. The SULIS website will also be useful in preparing for the workshop as outlined below.

### **Information About Your Site**

We have designed the Sustainable Landscape Design Basics for Homeowners Workshop to allow you to develop a design for a specific property of your choice (e.g., your home landscape, family cabin, etc.) and receive guidance as you develop ideas and begin to develop a design. It will be a good idea to not tackle a site that is too large so we recommend that you choose only the front yard or the back yard as the primary focus of your design project for the workshop and especially if the property is larger than one acre. At the same time, you will want to integrate this part of the property with the broader landscape.

Please bring the following information to the first workshop session on Saturday, January 7:

- A dimensioned sketch of your site (the entire property) that includes all existing buildings, structures, and hardscapes (e.g., house, garage, driveway, walkways, patios, decks, utilities, play sets, outbuildings, fencing, dog kennel, etc.) that will be retained. Existing trees and other plants that will be retained should also be included. Again, note this is just a dimensioned sketch, not a to-scale drawing.
- A plot plan of your site if available on hand or if you can get one from your city or county (an example of a plot plan is available on the SULIS website at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/design/plot.htm>).
- Pictures of your site – at minimum, you should have photos of all four elevations of the residence (front, back, and each side) and any other views that provide context and information that might be helpful to you and help others understand your site; pictures may also be stored and shared electronically with an iPad, laptop computer, or other electronic device (the minimum size for printed images should be 5” x 7”).
- A Completed Client Interview Form (the form is available on the SULIS website at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/design/inter.htm>).
- A Completed Site Survey Form (the form is available on the SULIS website at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/landscaping/design/siteform.htm>).

### **Tools and Supplies**

Basic drawing tools and paper will be supplied and are included in the workshop fee, but you may want to bring a calculator.

### **Performing a Soil Test for Your Site**

You should always have a soil test performed for any site for which you are developing a landscape design. Not understanding the soil and designing accordingly is one of the primary reasons why designed landscapes fail and healthy soil is the foundation of a healthy and long-lived landscape. While it is not required that you have your soil tested for the workshop, it is highly recommended if you haven't had your soil tested previously. The information from a soil test will provide important information that you will use during the design process and the implementation, establishment, and, ultimately, the long-term maintenance of your landscape.

A soil test form will be provided at the first workshop session on January 7. The cost of the test through the University of Minnesota Soil Testing Laboratory is \$17.00. Checks should be made out to the University of Minnesota and must be included with the completed form and the soil sample. Cash and credit cards are not accepted.

To ensure we have your soil test results in time, be sure to bring your samples to the next workshop session on January 21 along with your check made out to the University of Minnesota for the proper amount based on the cost of \$17/sample and the number of samples submitted.

Directions for collecting and submitting a soil sample:

1. Read and follow the directions for collecting soil samples on the back of the Lawn, Garden, and Landscape Soil Analysis Request form.
2. As indicated on the form, collect several representative subsamples from the area where the soil is being tested and mix the subsamples together to create a composite sample. For your information, make note of where each sample was collected and make copies of the front

page of the form if you are submitting more than one sample. Additional forms can also be printed from the Soil Testing Laboratory website at <http://soiltest.cfans.umn.edu> or directly from <http://soiltest.cfans.umn.edu/files/2012/08/Lawn-and-garden-form-2015.pdf>.

3. Label the sample(s) using a 4-letter/number code (e.g., CAL1, CAL2, etc.) and record the sample code in the box provided on the form.
4. Check the Trees & Shrubs – Broadleaf box (115) in the Fertilizer Recommendation Requested section.
5. Check the Regular Test box in the Check Tests Requested section.
6. Include your address in the space under the **OPTIONAL REFERENCE** heading in the upper, right-hand corner of the soil test form for the Soil Testing Laboratory's records.
7. Give your soil sample(s), completed form(s), and check to the instructor for delivery to the soil testing lab; once again, to ensure getting your soil test results in a timely fashion, be sure to bring your soil sample(s) and completed soil test form(s) to class on January 21.
8. The soil test results will be sent to us so we can review them ahead of time and we will bring them to the next workshop session for distribution and discussion.

**Do you need to test the soil in more than one location?** It depends. If you know the history of the property and believe the soil is relatively undisturbed and original to the site, collecting a composite sample and submitting a portion of that sample as indicated on the soil test form should be just fine. If, however, you know the soil on one part of the property is different than another spot on the property, it would be best to have a separate test done for each location. Keep in mind that the fill around the foundation is often different than the soil on the rest of the site. Also, if a layer of topsoil has been applied over the existing soil, it might be a good idea to test the topsoil and the soil below separately. This is also a good time to look for the presence of these kinds of soil layers since, if present, remedial action may be needed.

Though not needed for this class, if you have a vegetable garden or plan on including one in your new landscape design, it may be a good idea to have that area tested separately before planting the garden. Again, a separate test is only needed if you have reason to believe the soil in a particular area is different than the soil on the rest of the property. You can always submit additional samples to the soil testing lab for testing as needed as you develop your property.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions. I look forward to meeting you and working with you during the Creating a Home Landscape You Can Love & Enjoy: Sustainable Landscape Design Basics for Homeowners Workshop sessions.

See you on January 7!

James Calkins, Instructor

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