



## Master Gardener

### Best Management Practices

#### **Prior to Planting**

##### **Trees/shrubs, annuals, perennials, groundcovers and turf:**

- ❖ Test the soil to learn the pH and nutrients present.
- ❖ Determine soil drainage capacity.
- ❖ Select plants that will grow in existing soil, conditions and climate, and cultivars of plants and seeds that are bred for resilience.
- ❖ Avoid invasive species; instead opt for plants, especially natives, that minimize maintenance and increase habitat.
- ❖ Group plants with similar needs (water, fertilizer, sun) for easier maintenance.
- ❖ Consider the mature sizes of trees and shrubs that will fit the scale and size of landscape.
- ❖ Practice principle of “right plant, right place” to take advantage of garden microclimates (hot areas, light angles, moisture sinks) when planning garden layout.
- ❖ Use companion planting to attract beneficial insects and to use symbiotic biochemical and cultural benefits to advantage.

#### **At Planting**

- ❖ Plant trees/shrubs in holes that are 3-5 times the width of the root ball, and slightly less the height.
- ❖ Use no soil amendments in individual planting holes of new plantings.
- ❖ Improve compacted soil by aerating, double digging.
- ❖ Use compost to improve soil structure in garden beds and lawn.
- ❖ Mulch or use groundcover plants to conserve water, suppress weeds and prevent soil erosion.
- ❖ Mulch only 2-3 inches high, and 4-6 inches away from trunk of tree or shrub.

#### **Maintenance**

- ❖ During critical first year in ground for new landscape plantings, maintain moisture level while plant takes root.
- ❖ In times of low precipitation, irrigate all landscape planting deeply and in frequently, at a rate of 1” per week.
- ❖ Irrigate early in the morning to minimize evaporation losses.
- ❖ Fertilize and prune at recommended times of year specific to individual trees and shrubs.



- ❖ Monitor plants in the landscape regularly to recognize when pests are present.
- ❖ Identify plant problem and severity of damage before choosing a control.
- ❖ Identify the pest and susceptible life stages before your treat with a pesticides.
- ❖ Read and follow all directions on pesticides labels.

## Turf Care

- ❖ Maintain desirable pH (6.2-6.5) for turf grass, retesting every 3-5 years.
- ❖ Measure your turf's square footage – don't estimate!
- ❖ Eliminate turf in shady areas where difficult to grow.
- ❖ Let cool grasses go dormant in summer.
- ❖ Never remove more than one-third of leaf blade at mowing.
- ❖ Keep mower blades sharp.
- ❖ Avoid mowing under drought, or when lawn is wet.
- ❖ Return grass clippings to lawn- Don't bag!
- ❖ Core-aerate lawn in late summer or early spring.
- ❖ Fertilize and apply lime based on soil testing.
- ❖ Top-dress existing lawn with ¼" of compost to improve soil structure of clay soils.

## Weeds

- ❖ Hand-pull weeds or use spot herbicide where possible.
- ❖ Apply pre-emergent for summer/winter weeds at correct time.
- ❖ Identify weeds before using chemical control.

## Storm water Management

- ❖ Remove debris from storm drains regularly.
- ❖ Clean driveway and paved areas of leaves, trash, sediment.
- ❖ Reduce leaks, spills of hazardous waste.
- ❖ Store under cover and recycle potential pollutants.

## Wildlife Control

- ❖ Remove food, water, and shelter sources that attract/ harbor pests.
- ❖ Identify species before you choose a control.
- ❖ Seek professional assistance if problem persists.