



Derek Doster, owner and operator of Doster Lawn & Landscaping, displays some of the shrubs and other plants he suggests using in landscaping projects.

# Low Maintenance Tips, Trends From DOSTER LAWN & LANDSCAPING

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When asked about current trends in landscaping, Derek Doster, owner and operator of Doster Lawn & Landscaping, based in Dresden, said, “Low maintenance is really popular these days. People don’t want to spend their time trimming and spraying plants, especially during the hot summer months.”

Some of the more popular plants his customers like to incorporate into their landscape designs are: Ornamental trees, like the Golden Cypripedium Pom Pom, Crepe Myrtle, Encanex Azaleas shrub (blooms twice per year), Hydrangea blooming shrub, and other trees and shrubs that require less upkeep. Other low maintenance bushes he recommends are Green-Velvet

Boxwood and Green Mountain Boxwood, which are very slow-growing and don’t get too big. “You don’t have to trim them two or three times a year, like some of the cheaper Boxwood shrubs,” Doster said.

Doster stated perennials, such as Black-Eyed Susans, and Shasta Daisies, and different types of grasses are low maintenance.

“Knockout Rose bushes, which bloom from April until frost, are also still very popular. They come in pink, red and yellow. However, Japanese Beetles sometimes swarm on rose bushes, eating flowers and leaves.

Doster says ornamental trees that are good for shading a house include: Crepe Myrtle, Red Bud, River Birch, and Japanese Maple. These trees typically grow 8-25 ft. tall. Doster cautions against planting

trees or shrubs so close to the house that the branches touch it, because it can cause ants or other insect problems.

Lombardy Poplar, Leland Cypress, holly bushes, and Mountain Grass are sometimes used around the border of a yard to provide privacy.

Berry producing trees and shrubs are useful in attracting birds that eat mosquitoes and other insect pests.

“Dogwood trees are regaining in popularity,” Doster said. “A lot of the older varieties of Dogwood are prone to getting woodborers and they die off pretty quickly. But there’s a new Dogwood variety called Koufa that is less problematic than the older varieties.

“One of the biggest mistakes some homeowners make, and even some landscapers for that matter, is planting a shrub that’s going to get too big in the wrong

location,” Doster said. “Or, they’ll put a shade-loving plant out in the sun.”

When planting a lawn, it’s important to use the right varieties, based on the amount of sunlight received each day. For areas that will receive six or more hours of sunshine per day, Doster recommends Bermuda grass; and for partly-shaded areas, it’s best to use Fescue. These grasses may be planted using seed, sprigs or sod. For densely shaded areas, it’s best to landscape it using shade-loving plants instead of grass.”

In addition to lawn care that involves sod and mulch, home gardeners must take into account PH correction, fertilization, mowing, and aeration. Also, shrubs and trees must be trimmed. Other beautification projects involve installing sidewalks, retaining walls and pavers.

# Simple Steps To A Greener Lawn

Many homeowners aspire to have lush green lawns. Thriving, healthy lawns can make homeowners proud and improve their property values, as the lawns make homes more attractive to prospective buyers when those homes hit the market. While lush lawns won’t suddenly appear overnight, homeowners can take certain steps toward creating the stunning green lawns of their dreams.

**Don’t overreact to brown lawns.** Lawns can turn brown for various reasons, but overreacting at the first sign of brown grass can make the situation worse. Some lawns turn brown because they have gone dormant to save energy for the cooler and more damp days to come. Applying

fertilizer in such situations can damage rather than revitalize lawns. Fertilizers or chemicals applied to brown lawns may burn the lawn, creating additional stress that potentially hinders the lawns recovery.

**Aerate compacted soil.** Compacted soil may be the culprit behind discolored lawns. Over time, soils of all kinds can become compacted, which prevents moisture from reaching a lawn’s roots. As a result, the roots don’t grow and the grass is denied the nutrients it needs to thrive. Aeration combats compacted soil by poking tiny holes in the ground to loosen the soil. Speak with a landscaping professional about the best time to aerate, which typically only needs to be done

once per year. As compacted soil becomes looser, the lawn will become more resistant to drought and begin to resemble the lush green lawn you’re aiming for.

**Raise your mower blades.** Some homeowners set their mower blades to the lowest possible setting so they can extend the intervals between cuts and reduce the number of times they mow in the hot summer sun. But cutting the grass too short exposes the soil to the sun, making it difficult for soil to retain moisture and promote deep, strong plant roots. When raising the blades, inspect them to make sure they are still sharp. Dull blades won’t cut the grass as cleanly as sharp ones, potentially causing tears in grass blades that invite

disease and contribute to poor moisture retention.

**Address pest problems.** Pests are unwanted guests who affect lawns in various ways, depending on the type of pest. Grubs feed on grass roots, while mites feed on the nutrient-rich juices that lawns need to thrive. Pest control may depend on the type of pest and how advanced the infestation is, so speak with a landscaping professional about your pest problems before attempting to combat the problem on your own. Letting a pest problem fester may force you to replace the lawn entirely, but addressing it promptly can likely save you both the cost and headache associated with such a project.

# Add Curb Appeal To Your Property

Many people are familiar with the idea that a strong first impression can go a long way. While that idea is most often referenced in regard to personal interactions, it’s also applicable to real estate.



When selling a home, homeowners who emphasize curb appeal may find it far easier to sell their homes. Curb appeal refers to the impression a home’s exterior makes on people seeing the home for the first time.

Projects that improve curb appeal can be vast undertakings or simpler projects, and the following are a handful of projects to improve a home’s curb appeal that run the gamut from simple to complex.

**Clean up the yard.** Cleaning up the yard is among the simpler yet most effective projects to improve a home’s curb appeal. When selling their homes, homeowners should clear the yard of any clutter, including kids’ toys, grass clippings or items that might be scattered throughout the yard. A cluttered yard suggests homeowners do not care much about their home’s appearance, and that

may lead buyers to think that indifference extended to maintaining the home’s interior as well. Many buyers will ignore properties without any external aesthetic appeal, but cleaning up the yard does not require much effort or expense on the part of sellers.

**Make the main entryway more inviting.** Creating a more inviting entryway won’t be as simple as cleaning up the yard, but it can help create a strong first impression without breaking the bank. To begin, remove plants and furniture from the front porch or area surrounding the doorway, as such items can create a cluttered feel. If the front door is old, replace it. Custom doors may be expensive, but they might add the wow factor buyers are looking for. If a new door is beyond your means or just unnecessary, repaint the door,

add up if it’s been awhile since these areas were refurbished. Still, one of the first things buyers will notice when getting out of their cars is the ground they’re walking on, so patch and repair or even replace driveways and walkways that have fallen into disrepair.

**Add or upgrade outdoor living spaces.** Outdoor living spaces also can set a property apart from others on the market. A recent study from the National Association of Realtors found that buyers would not hesitate to pay asking price for homes with outdoor living spaces. When adding or upgrading outdoor living spaces, try to depersonalize the spaces as much as possible, as buyers want to picture themselves, and not the sellers, enjoying these areas. Include some comfortable furniture, adequate lighting and a dining area in your outdoor

living space as well.

Curb appeal can add a lot to a home, while lack of such appeal can make a home difficult to sell. Homeowners who want to sell their properties for asking price or more should address curb appeal before putting their homes on the market.

## Did You Know?

The home improvement market, which includes both improvements and maintenance, has rebounded considerably from its most recent low point in 2011. The Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) of Harvard University indicated in early 2015 that the upcoming year would surpass the \$324 billion spent on improvements during the peak of the housing boom a decade ago. Even though homebuilding and the home industry in general is still not at complete recovery, trends within the home improvement industry do suggest that homeowners have once again become comfortable investing in their homes.

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## PLAN YOUR TREE PLANTING

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**A** Trees That Grow Less Than 25 Feet. This area ends 15 feet away from electric utility wires. Care must be taken to prevent growth into the wires. Call us if you have any questions about planting near utility wires. Some of them carry higher voltages and may require greater clearance distances.

**B** Trees That Grow No Taller Than 40 Feet. This front area, which is mostly lawn, should be used to decorate or frame your house instead of hiding it from sight. Select your trees first, then shrubs can be added to complement the trees and the house.

**C** Trees That Grow 60 Feet In Height. Larger trees may be planted at the rear of the house if there are no power lines. Plant at least 35 feet from the house for proper root development and to prevent damage to the house.

Few of nature's gifts are as beautiful as trees. Their beauty is universally appreciated. Less well known is their importance in energy conservation. Evergreen trees planted on the north side of your home block those wintry winds. Trees that lose their leaves in winter belong on the south side. In summer they shade the house. In the winter the bare branches allow the sun to warm the home.

That's why it's so important to plan your planting to be sure the trees thrive and don't grow into a problem later, especially around power lines. It's amazing how quickly that cute little sapling can grow up and into utility lines and require drastic action for safety's sake. That's why we suggest you check with us before planting to be on the safe side. We are here to help you.

Weakley County Municipal Electric System 587-9521