



Low Maintenance Gardens

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Are you spending more time “working” in your garden than just enjoying it? Maybe there is something that we can do to help you, for there is an easier way to keep your yard and garden looking beautiful.

Low maintenance gardening starts with choosing the right plant for the right place. A lot of plants are naturally easier to maintain, other than providing them with suitable soil, proper exposure and a little fertilizer and water. These plants may be planted and then just left alone without you having to worry about pests, diseases, or extensive pruning etc.

It is worth the time searching out easy to care for plants. Choose dwarf and slow growing plants, this is where a good nursery or garden center with knowledgeable staff are the best places to start.

Avoid fast growing and invasive perennials such as yarrow, plume poppy, bee balm and phlox. These plants are lovely in the garden but they have the unfortunate habit of creeping and spreading through the garden, if you have a large area you wish to cover – then perhaps these are the plants for you.

Avoid delicate plants that will need staking and extra care. Although they look spectacular in the garden they need constant protection from pests and diseases, plus they require, rich, moist soil. If you cannot resist delphiniums or hollyhocks look for the compact ones, and/or disease resistant cultivars that are easier to care for. Not having to be staked, pruned, or treated for rust and black spot.

Selecting the right type of planting for any given area will indeed help to reduce maintenance. Instead of lawn grass that needs regular fertilizing, watering, mowing. A self sustaining meadow can not only look good but will cut down on “gardening time” do not use those “garden meadows in a can “– but purchase either individual seeds or plants that are already growing, there is a wealth of

ornamental grasses on the market.

Plant weedy spots with thickly growing ground covers, for where there is a bare spot you will get weeds. Not only are you cutting down on the need to weed, but also as ground covers work very well on sunny or shady banks – the danger of lawn mowers on these slopes is eliminated. Ground covers will grow under trees where nothing else survives.

It is important to start with a weed free bed, so that the ground cover does not have a lot of competition. You can clean the soil by turning the ground over, with a roto tiller if possible – otherwise you will have to turn it with a spade. Weeds will sprout, then turn it over again and repeat until the weeds are gone – PLEASE do not spray them. The ground cover will choke out any weeds as I know full well, I have periwinkle in spots that are difficult to mow – if any one would like several truck loads – just call me

Plants to try? In shady areas try pachysandra, barrenwort, wild ginger, hostas become very large and a host of other plants.

In the sun try creeping juniper, daylilies, ground cover roses, or clematis, providing their feet is cool, or checks with your garden center for other suggestions.

For fast results use a lot of plants. , If this is too expensive, spread the plants apart, putting mulch in between them to keep down the weeds, it is surprising how quickly the bare spots fill in.

Keep your eye on this planting for the first year, removing any weeds that might appear. Water and fertilize the plants to help them spread. Get established again after our harsh winter

If you do go with the meadow, especially if you use the meadow in a can, you will get a good display the first year, but after that you will end up with just grasses. Let these die down and mow this will help to scatter the seeds for next year, purchase new clumps of wild flowers, or the seed packages that I spoke of earlier. This way you will replenish your “meadow” and have a selection of pretty flowers that will be on going, providing that you choose perennials

I will add that the Ecology Garden on Ashburnham, south of Lansdowne is the place to go for unusual wild flower plants, they are open Tuesday, Thursday and Sundays for sales, although I am sure that someone there will help you any day of the week – other than Saturday – This garden is never closed, in fact one of the gates has been removed. It is a good place to purchase trees, bushes, plants, compost and soil. Children and pets on lease are welcome – bring the little ones to explore the maze and the children’s ‘zoo’ We have lambs ears, bean and pea tepees etc. they will have a wonderful time – yes they may touch, sniff and in some cases taste. This is a good place to purchase a bouquet of flowers. Be sure to check out the test gardens that rarely get watered and the meadow that is not weeded – You will get so many ideas.

A list of some plants appropriate for the Meadow

Black-Eyed Susan, Evening Primrose (Onethera) Coreopsis, Blanket Flower, Native Grasses,

Golden Rod (there are 97 varieties) Sunflowers, Asters, Cone flowers, (Echinacea) Shasta Daisy, Butterfly flower (Buddelia) Butterfly weed, Maiden Pinks, Penstemon, Rock Cress, Wild Lupin and Gay feather (Liatris)

Previously published in the Peterborough Examiner.