



Establish a New Lawn and Garden in a New Development

by Kent County Master Gardener Faith Loper

There are many challenges inherent in the move to a new housing development, and the necessity for creating a healthy lawn and garden. To achieve optimum results, a comprehensive yard and garden roadmap must be developed even before topsoil replacement, plantings and other landscaping ideas are implemented.

My husband and I began our well vetted property enhancement project with the end in mind. We desired healthy, low maintenance grounds, thematic areas, and colorful seasonal privacy fencing. Ultimately, we implemented a functional landscape design that linked the front, side and rear of the house to expandable walkways and a patio.



Kent County Master Gardener, Faith Loper photo

Use of container gardens to enhance the landscape.

Plant Migration

I love plants and enjoy growing them year-round. Migrating indoor plants to an airy outdoor placement is like offering them a spa treatment. I replant them in larger pots with fresh potting soil mix. My spider, palm, snake, hibiscus, and begonia plants are positioned on the deck, patio and porch.

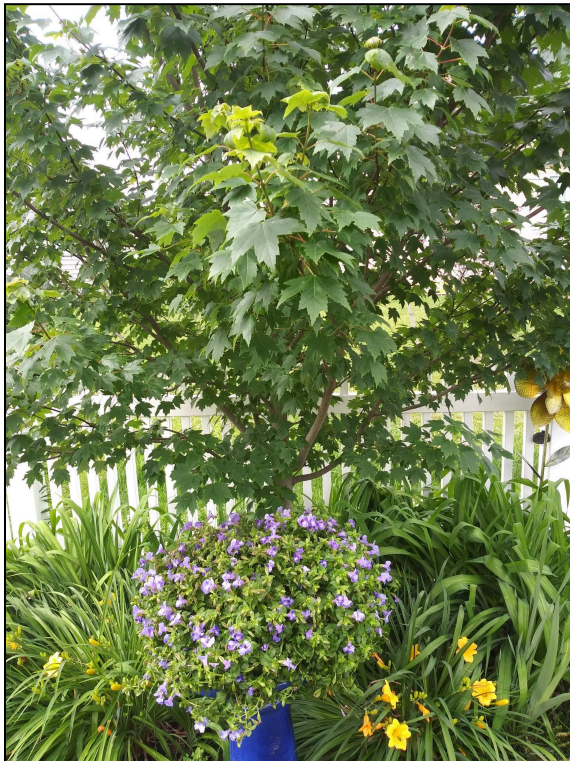
Container gardening allows me to use my collection of unique planters. All sides of the house and yard are accented with colorful potted plants such as zinnias, daisies, geraniums, pansies and caladium.

Raised Bed Vegetable Garden

A rewarding experience is to pick fresh tomatoes, carrots, lettuce, beans and herbs from the garden. My raised bed garden offers a viable bed that is positioned for optimum sun exposure. I use a basic mix of 60% topsoil, 30% compost and 10% potting mix. A measured placement of seeds and plants are positioned within a 4x8 foot garden layout. Every three to four weeks, a nutrient rich fertilizer is added. Watering is critical to the establishment of healthy plants. Plants are given about two inches of water each week.

Left to Your Own Resolve

Often builders of new developments fail to save topsoil and other unique land features. After settlement day, we realized that precious trees had been graded away, and topsoil stripped from the property. We were left with sod resting upon lifeless clay. A Delaware Cooperative Extension Office soil analysis concluded that the PH level was less than 7 (acidic). A liming material was added, along with a fertilizer which provided an immediate supply of nutrients to the soil. Additional topsoil was introduced during the seasons of seeding and reseeding with Delaware Tall Fescue.



Kent County Master Gardener, Faith Loper photo

Yard Planting

An ideal time to plant trees and shrubs is mid-autumn and early spring. During these times the warmth and moist soil offer ideal root growth conditions.

The positioning of evergreen trees and shrubs is normally influenced by the need for privacy. Our backyard oasis ultimately integrated foliage screening (softscape) with fencing (hardscape). We identified sun, shade, soil, drainage and spacing issues prior to planting. Holes two to three times wider than the

plant root balls were dug. Topsoil was placed around the roots, followed by two to three inches of mulch around - but not touching the trunk. We planted: trees – Red/Silver Maple, Willow Oak, Crepe Myrtle, Ornamental Cherry, River Birch; shrubs – Boxwood, Azalea, Arborvitae, Roses, Hydrangea; and Perennial flowers.

Hardy Perennials

Perennials are a very low maintenance choice. They are hardy and nearly self-sustaining. These yearly visitors give me more time to enjoy seasonal colors. I am entertained by my sun loving daylilies, daisies, marigolds (annuals), primroses, coneflowers, sunflowers, sedum; and shade loving Hosta, hydrangeas, coleus, violas and astilbes.



Faith Loper, author and Kent County Master Gardener

For more information about Master Gardener workshops, garden helplines, presentations, becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer, or other activities, please visit these websites.

UD Website - <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/cooperative-extension/environmental-stewardship/master-gardeners/>

DSU Website- <https://cast.desu.edu/cooperative-extension/agriculture-natural-resources/delaware-master-gardeners>

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