

Getting to Know Your Landscape
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One of my New Year's Resolutions every year is to get organized and keep records of my landscape. By early spring I am so busy cleaning up flower beds, garden areas, and turf that I make a mental note to do that after all tasks have been completed. That never happens!

I have been working in my flower beds since the weekly watering using the sprinkler and drip irrigation system as well as the occasional rains encouraged numerous weeds to sprout and the Bermuda grass to grow much better in the beds than in the turf area. As I carefully dug out the weeds and grass, I pondered the results of my broken resolution and thought: Do I know the names of all trees, shrubs, and plants in my landscape? Do I know the names and varieties of the perennials? Do I know the names and locations of the annuals I planted to add color to the landscape? What soil amendments did I make and when did I do that? Where is the drawing I had made of the new bed and walkway I wanted to add this year?

During the months we had so many days when the temperature was over 100 degrees, I had to decide how to use those hours most effectively when it was too hot to work outside – take a nap, work on the inside unfinished projects, or resurrect and complete the landscape journal. As wonderful as a nap sounded, I decided to dust off the landscape journal so I could start making changes before the year was over.

Here are some tips about valuable information to put into a log to track your landscape:

- Plant name. Be sure to record the plant name and the botanic name if you know it.
- Type of plant. Is it a flower, vegetable, fruit, herb, shrub, tree, annual, perennial, or bulb?
- Date planted. Show if you planted seeds or seedlings, planted bulbs, or if you transplanted plants from pots. Be sure to record the pot size of transplanted plants.
- Location of plant. Be sure to mark the location with a plant stake or flag as well as adding the location of each plant to the drawing of your landscape.
- Exposure. Is the plant in full sun, partial sun, or shade?
- Bloom date. Record the color of the bloom. It is also helpful to record the first bloom date and the last bloom date. This will probably change every year, but seeing the varying bloom times will help with planning for year-round color in the landscape.
- Harvest date. Record the date vegetables or herbs were harvested.
- Pruning. When did you prune the plant and how did you prune it?
- Pests. List the names of pests, when you found them, where they were on the plant, and how they were treated/remediated.

- Weeds. Show the names of weeds, when they appeared, and how they were treated or removed.
- Fertilizer or soil amendment. Show the date and type of any fertilizer or soil amendment used in the area of the plant.
- Watering and rainfall. Record when you watered as well as the date and amount of rain.
- Weather. Record the last frost date in the spring and the first frost date in the fall. Also note unusually hot or cold weather, precipitation dates and amounts, storm information, and storm or wind damage to plants.

What you need to document your landscape:

- Notebook or journal. Use a separate page for each variety of plant so you can record all information for just one cultivar on a page.
- Camera. Take pictures of plants in various stages, mature sizes of plants, colors of leaves and flowers, weeds, pests, etc.

Be sure to take pictures from the time you get the soil ready for planting, during the plant growth, and through the flowering/harvesting stages. Always include the date, time, location, and any special notes so you have your own personal information to use when planning for future landscape additions or changes.

Remember to track each plant from the beginning in your garden and throughout the year. Note successes to use next year and also note what did not work so you won't repeat mistakes. Put all pictures, paper landscape designs, seed packets, and plant labels in an envelope so you can easily locate information about your landscape.

It's October, and fall is the best time of the year to plant. I took advantage of purchasing a number of new plants to add to the landscape at the Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale last week, and I've promised myself I will get them planted within the next few weeks so they have time to develop good root systems before next year. As soon as the plants are in the ground or in pots, I will update my journal and be ready to record the important information about each new addition to my landscape. I am so excited to know that I have kept a very important New Year's Resolution after all.

If you have any questions, call the Taylor County Extension Office at 325-672-6048 or email us at mgardeners@yahoo.com. We hope you visit bcmgtx.org for all Big Country Master Gardener information and events, like us on BCMGA Facebook, and check out training presentations on BCMGA YouTube. We are here to help you.