

Start to plan yard from the ground up

(Ap) — You have just moved into your new home and are eager to start giving your yard that "lived here for a long time" look. That's understandable, says an article in the current issue of Building Ideas. Before you draft an overall planting or decking plan, consider the following points to help you avoid costly — and time-consuming — mistakes:

- Start a garden notebook where you can accumulate information such as plant names, locations and bloom times.

- Start walking, watching, and working in your yard as soon as possible. Enjoy knowing that it is wise to start small and go easy. Place plants where success seems most likely.

- Experiment. When you get a packet of petunias, put half in one spot and half in another and see where they do best.

- Consider all these early plantings as temporary. If necessary, put treasured plants into large pots and move them around the yard to see where you like them and where they like to be.

- If you have a glaring need for shade, plant one or two key trees 20 to 30 feet to the west or south of your home's main living areas. Buy the largest trees you can afford — you'll soon recoup the cost if you have air conditioning, and the increased comfort from shade on hot summer days is priceless.

- Soak up information, impressions and experiences, whether you are in a new climate or another section of your old block. It will also take a full cycle of seasons to find the best location for a patio, which views to screen and which to enhance, where shadows fall, where the wind blows cold in the winter or

breezes are most pleasant in the summer.

- Look at what is growing in the neighborhood. Flowers and ground covers that do well in front yards on one side of the street should do well in the backyards on the other. See what kinds of trees are most common, and which grow and look best. Also check the selection of plants at a nearby nursery. If something you like is missing, ask why. After a long-distance move, visit your county agent and pick up bulletins about growing plants in that area.

- Call in an expert to help you decide which trees to save if you are building a new house around trees already on the property. Protect trees not only from contact with the building machinery, but as much as possible from soil compaction. If you must change grades more than a few inches, build a well or a terrace for several feet around the trunk of an affected tree, or it could slowly die.

- Prune branches higher on maturing trees to get more light, air circulation, room to mow without ducking, or to open up views. This work will help you when it comes time to decide on final plans and to determine which, if any, trees to move.

- Don't wait for the conveniences you need. If sodding isn't an option, you can plant a temporary lawn of ryegrass that will green up in three weeks. When it's time to plant or sod a permanent lawn in the fall, till under the ryegrass and then improve the soil by adding fertilizer, organic matter or sand.

- If you need a path or a patio, make a temporary one with pine needles, wood chips or tanbark. By putting old cardboard, plastic or



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newspapers underneath, less mulch is needed.

- Test the placing. If you like it, you can lay flagstone or pour concrete the second year. If not, experiment.

- Build the simple and portable. If you don't want to wait a year for a deck, build a small one that you can

move to a new place or incorporate into a larger deck at a later date.

- As the first year ends, select the best and most practical of these ideas and make a formal plan. Or, share your ideas with a landscape architect or designer, who can help you form a plan that can be implemented over several years.

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