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Ground Cover Solves Landscape Problems

EAST LANSING
If you are one of the many homeowners who has a landscape problem area, try using ground covers, say horticulturists at Michigan State University.

The problem area may be the bank of a drainage ditch, a bank along a road, or a close area where a lawn mower cannot be used. Ground covers can also replace grass in shady locations or provide erosion control on dry slopes. Ground covers range in size from lawn grass to large shrubs and are available in various colors and textures. Like any ornamental tree or shrub, they will become a permanent part of your landscape and should be selected with care. Such ground covers as wild ginger and English ivy are excellent for shady situations and can easily be planted in small strips between the sidewalk and house and under trees.

THOSE SUITED for sunny locations include evergreen candytuft, Indian or winter strawberry, and mockers. Crown vetch and Hall's honeysuckle are especially suited for wastelands or dry situations on banks.

Thorough preparation of the planting sites is a must. Perennial weed areas should be cleared before planting, because most ground covers cannot compete against established weeds.

USUALLY spring plantings are most successful. Space the plants according to their size, immediate effect desired, and their rate of growth and habit. Always water the plants thoroughly immediately after planting.

Weed control is a must until the ground cover is fully established. A two-inch layer of mulch will control 90 percent of the weeds. On slopes, coarse netting is also used to hold the slope until the ground cover is established.

The horticulturists suggest visiting a nursery to study the many varieties of the old standards that might be used as ground covers. They can add a "finished touch" to your landscape.

How To Fill Bare Spots In Lawn

EAST LANSING
Unless those bare spots on your lawn are at least one foot square or larger, attempting to thicken up the grass sod by overseeding may be a waste of

time and lawn seed, say turfgrass specialists at Michigan State University. Competition from the established sod does not give the young seedlings a chance to get started, explain the specialists. They recommend a good fertilization and weed control program. They also suggest filling in the small spots with plugs of sod removed from the other areas of the lawn.

HOWEVER, for the larger spots, Robert Shearman, MSU extension turfgrass specialist, recommends the following steps:

1. Go over bare spots with a garden rake to loosen the soil. Soil moisture is right for seeding when the soil rakes loosely (does not form small clods).
2. Select a good seed (certified, if possible). Use a Kentucky bluegrass variety for sunny areas and a red fescue variety in shaded spots.
3. Sow the seed by hand, sprinkling it evenly over the entire area. A small handful of seed will cover a bare spot six feet in diameter.
4. After seeding, rake gently so that the seeds will have good contact with the soil. This is important for even seed germination and grass growth.
5. Soil moisture shouldn't be a problem in the spring. However, if the top one inch of soil does dry out, give the seeded area a light watering with a lawn sprinkler or sprinkling can.

Frost Injured Trees Require Special Care

During January, parts of Michigan experienced severe winter temperatures down to -15 degrees F and -20 degrees F, and fruit specialists at Michigan State University report that flower buds of peach and apricot have suffered considerable injury. In some locations cherry buds were also injured. The outlook for flowering on these damaged trees will be minimum this year.

In some cases the wood may also have been injured, evident by discoloration, and the specialists offer these suggestions for handling severely injured trees:

1. Delay pruning until growth starts. Then remove only dead wood. Make no large pruning cuts.
2. Do not use oil sprays on injured stone fruit trees.
3. Apply nitrogen fertilizer before growth starts.
4. Protect foliage from diseases and insects. Do not omit the leaf-curl spray. Protect young trees against cutworms.
5. Give trees good cultural treatment. Keep weeds away from young trees.

Experts Give Tips On Rose Planting

EAST LANSING
The proper time to plant packaged roses depends upon the severity of winter temperatures, say horticulturists at Michigan State University. In Michigan, the homeowner should plant in the spring following this procedure:

1. In a well drained and spaded area, dig a hole approximately 15 inches wide and 18 inches deep. Add a quart of peat moss or compost and mix well with the soil. Form blunt cone of the mixture in planting hole.
2. Prune rose canes to 12 inches and remove any broken or injured roots. Position rose in soil cone so that the bud union (swelling at base of stem) is about one inch below the surface. Spread roots out in a natural manner down slope of mound.
3. Work in soil around roots to eliminate any air pockets. Firm soil about roots and add more soil until hole is three-fourths full.
4. Fill remainder of hole with water and allow it to soak in; then refill. Fill remainder of hole with soil and tamp. Head canes back to about eight inches, making cuts one-fourth inch above an outside bud.
5. Mound soil around and over plant to height of eight to 10 inches. This protects the rose canes from drying out. When buds break, gradually remove mound of soil probably within a week or 10 days. When vigorous growth starts, apply plant food according to manufacturer's specifications.

Wet glasses will leave white rings on furniture. To remove them, try a mixture of olive oil and white vinegar in equal parts. Rub with the grain.

FIX-IT TIP

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FIX-IT TIP

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