Fall
2020
Edition

EC Landscape News

PLANT SIZE SELECTION

It is understandable that most people want to 'buy big' when selecting plant materials in order to get a jump-start on achieving a mature looking landscape. In the long run however, buying big isn't always better.

Studies have shown that smaller plants are in an aggressive growth stage, which helps to achieve a speedy recovery from the transplanting process. Younger plants also establish quickly to their new environment, adapting to the soil, watering, and other site conditions.

Smaller sized plants are also easier on the budget. In comparison to larger plants, you can often get three 5-gallon plants for the same price of one 15-gallon plant. Smaller plants typically catch up or even outgrow larger plants in one to three growing seasons.

In addition, large container plants are typically pruned repeatedly for fullness, thus thinning out at the base. Hedges started with smaller plants will look fuller and healthier, and are less likely to suffer from middle-of-the-row atrophy caused by competition for water.

There are times when a larger plant is a better choice, especially if you have chosen a slow-growing plant.

The following are general cautionary tips to help with plant selection.

- Buy local when possible
- Make sure the plants are not root-bound, unstable or loose in their container
- Look for a balance in foliage mass and container size
- Check for unwanted bugs or pests on the plants and containers
- Make sure the leaves are shiny and lush, and not wilting
- Select plants that are in the bud stage, which will ease with transplanting

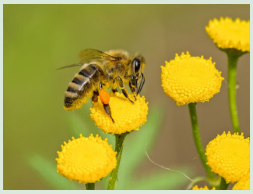
POLLINATION, BEES & COLONY LOSS

Pollination is vital to flowering plants, trees, and food crops throughout the world. Plants that rely on the transfer of pollen to reproduce are dependent on vectors or pollination agents, such as wind, water, birds, insects, and other animals, to move pollen from flower to flower.

Bees are considered the most efficient and dependable pollinators, making up the majority (80%) of the insect and animal pollinator work force. They may be small, but bees play an important role in environmental and agricultural sustainability.

Modern agriculture also depends upon bees to fulfill the industries pollination needs. The same can be said for plants and trees that make up our urban, rural, and natural landscape environments.

There are over 4,000 species of bees in the United States, including the bumblebee (*Bombus bombini*) and the popular honey bee (*Apis mellifera*).



Honey bees are not native to North America and were brought to the United States by European colonists in the mid-17th century. They are considered domesticated or managed bees because the vast majority of the honey bee population are tended by beekeepers. A honey bee colony sustains between 10,000 to 100,000 bees, with the average size being 20,000 bees.

Migratory beekeeping began in the United States in the early 1900s. Beekeepers move their honey bee hives from state to state to access the most abundant sources of nectar for commercial honey production and to provide pollination services to farmers. Beeswax, pollen, and propolis are also commercially produced by honey bees.

Bumblebees are considered wild bees and are native to North America. They are seldom recognized for their importance as wild flower pollinators or for their contributions to the agriculture industry. Bumblebees live in colonies ranging in size from 50 to 500 bees. They do not produce commercial quantities of honey.

In contrast to honey bees, bumblebees are larger and more efficient pollinators due to their size, shape, and ability to vibrate, known as buzz pollination. They often nest underground in abandoned rodent burrows and are mostly pollen collectors, whereas the honey bee's interest is in the nectar.

Although back yard and commercial beekeeping have become popular, populations of managed and native bees have been in a state of decline across the United States for the last few decades.

Some winter die-off is common for both honey bees and bumblebees, but it is becoming increasingly more difficult for bees to keep up with the pace of winter die-off coupled with other forms of colony loss.

The declines in pollinator populations are being attributed to habitat loss due to urbanization, climate change, parasites, diseases, and the improper use of pesticides. Protecting pollinators, of all species and types therefore, is critical to maintaining a diverse and sustainable landscape ecosystem and for supporting agricultural production.

Environmental Concepts recognizes the importance of creating comprehensive landscape maintenance rotation schedules that address the environmental issues and concerns for pollinator protection. It is through applying Best Management Practices (BMPs) in each unique environ that a balanced ecosystem can be achieved.

Examples of BMPs include: increasing plant diversity; staggering seasonal flowering plant blooms; trimming shrubs and groundcover following bloom; using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies.

LATE-SEASON PLANTING SUGGESTIONS

Spring is associated as being the optimal time of the year to plant, especially when nurseries and garden centers are amply stocked with a broad selection of new plant materials. Do not count out planting in the fall or early winter however, as viable alternatives.

The benefits of planting late in the season include taking advantage of favorable air, soil, and moisture conditions needed to sustain plants through their first critical growth-year.

Fall and winters are typically mild in our region, with cooler temperatures and moderate precipitation. Fall planting is also less stressful on the plants and offers a longer period for plants to adapt.

We are often asked which shrubs can tolerate frost and which can be planted in the fall and early winter. The following is a list of some of the plants that we consider hardy, and have proven to successfully survive planting in the fall.

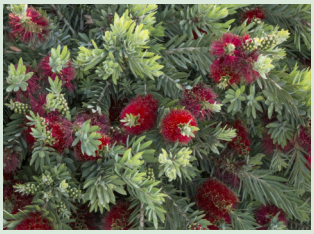
SHRUBS:

***Ligustrum japonicum* 'Texanum' – Japanese Privet**
Evergreen, regular water, full sun or partial shade, non-edible fruit (berries), clusters of white flowers. A very successful, hardy shrub, which is commonly used as hedges.

***Photinia x fraseri* – Red Tip Photinia**
Evergreen, moderate to regular water, full sun, berries, clusters of small white flowers. Known for their waxy, maroon leaves in the spring that turn to green. Experience has shown that direct sun and high heat can prove to be fatal in our area. Otherwise hardy, commonly used as a barrier hedge.

***Pittosporum tobira* 'Variagatum' – Japanese Mock Orange**
Evergreen, moderate to regular watering, full sun or partial shade, clusters of small white flowers. Known for their variegated green foliage, commonly used in our area as row-hedges and borders. They are susceptible to stress under high-heat conditions. Otherwise, very hardy and attractive.

FLOWERING SHRUBS:



***Callistemon viminalis* 'Little John' – Dwarf Bottlebrush**
Evergreen, moderate to regular water, full sun, bright red flower spikes in fall, winter, and spring. An excellent, attractive and hardy shrub. Very successful in our area, Withstands heat, cold.

***Westringia fruticosa* – Coast Rosemary**
Evergreen, little to moderate water, full sun, medium green to gray-green variegated leaves with small white flowers. A versatile shrub as a hedge with mass planting or popular as a dense groundcover when pruned regularly.

***Eremophila nivea* – Silky Emu Bush**
Evergreen, little to moderate water, full sun, silver leaves with purple flowers. An upright shrub, known for its contrasting, striking appearance, replete with silver needle-like leaves and abundance of purple flowers. Heat and drought tolerant.

***Leucophyllum frutescens* – Texas Ranger**
Evergreen, little to moderate water, full sun, silver/gray leaves with lavender flowers. An upright shrub, rounded form with annual pruning. Its lush gray-green foliage is complimented by lavender-blue flowers. Heat and drought tolerant.

FALL LANDSCAPING TIPS

Although fall typically tiptoes in with little fanfare in Southern California, it is an important time of the year to prepare your landscaping for winter. The following are tasks and areas that are highly recommended for attention at this time of the year.

Fertilization: Applying fertilizer in the fall restores needed nutrients and helps lawns to recover from summer damage. Timing is critical however, and getting an application down before the first frost is important. A quick/slow-release fertilizer allows a portion of the nutrients to become active immediately, while the balance continues to be released through the winter, producing positive results in the spring.

Dethatching and Aerification: Thatch typically accumulates over the summer due to turf growth and mowing. When the thatch layer becomes too thick it should be removed. Dethatching can be done manually or mechanically and should be performed in the fall when the weather is cooler. Your lawn will also benefit from aerification, which breaks up compacted soil and allows air, moisture, and nutrients to penetrate down into the soil and root system.

Shrub and Tree Pruning: Fall is the best time to prune plants, shrubs, and trees in order to ensure stimulating new growth in the spring. Pruning improves the health of a tree and is essential in developing a strong structure and desirable shape.

Mulch: When properly applied around shrubs and groundcover, mulch is one of the most effective, yet simple means for maintaining a healthy landscape. Benefits of mulching include nutrient replenishment and soil moisture retention, which can cut down on watering needs by as much as 25%. Fall is the perfect time to top off your mulch if it needs a fresh look.

Tools: And last, but not least, don't forget to go through your toolshed and give your tools some tender loving care. Edge and blade sharpening are a must before the start of the growing season, which always seems to arrive in our area sooner than expected.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCEPTS LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT, INC.

PO Box 1788
Temecula CA 92593
(951) 587-6551
www.eclmi.com
CA Lic #775917