

# Your Garden

## Seven Secrets For A Beautiful, Low-Maintenance Landscape

(NAPSA)—Anyone who thinks a low-maintenance landscape has to be plain green and ugly should think again. With a bit of planning, some smart plant choices and the help of these seven garden designer secrets, you can have a yard that's the envy of your neighborhood—and enough time to enjoy it.

**1. Choose plants that will flourish given the realities of your yard.** Some plants like full sun while others tolerate shade; some don't mind freezing temperatures while others are unfazed by relentless heat. Selecting plants that thrive in the existing conditions of your site ensures a healthy, attractive landscape. Observe the light levels around your home—six to eight hours plus of uninterrupted sun each day indicates full sun, four to six hours is considered part shade or part sun, and less than four hours would be a shaded site. Plants at the garden center should have tags that tell you their light preferences. Shopping locally helps ensure that all the plants you see will be suitable for the climate in your yard.

**2. Plant drought-tolerant shrubs.** These specially adapted plants thrive with limited water once they are established (usually after their first season in the ground). Drought-tolerant plants sail through hot summer days easily, saving you the time and money it takes to water the landscape. Read the tag attached to the shrub for information on its drought tolerance or look for visual cues such as silvery-grey leaves, as are found on Petit Bleu caryopteris, and narrow, needlelike foliage, as on Fine Line rhamnus.



**Compact plants like 'Lilac Chip' butterfly bush contribute to a low-maintenance landscape.**

**3. Spare yourself the time it takes to prune your plants by opting for compact varieties.** Compact (also known as dwarf) plants never get too large for the space where you've planted them so you don't have to bother with confusing pruning instructions. Most people's favorite plants are available in compact, no-prune varieties: hydrangea lovers can try Little Lime or Bobo dwarf-panicle hydrangeas or the tidy Cityline series of big-leaf hydrangea. Rose fans should take note of the low-growing Oso Easy series with its range of 10 vivid colors, all under 3' high. Even butterfly bush, a shrub notorious for its giant, sprawling habit, is available in a compact 2' height with the innovative Lo & Behold series.

**4. Choose plants with high-quality, attractive foliage.** These look great even when not in bloom, beautifying your landscape for months instead of just a few weeks. Colorful foliage, including the dark purple of Black Lace elderberry or the cheery gold of Chardonnay Pearls deutzia, and variegated foliage, such as My Monet weigela or Sugar Tip hibiscus, make engaging focal points



**The cheery gold of Chardonnay Pearls deutzia can brighten your yard.**

from early spring through late fall. Mix them with such evergreens as Castle Spire holly and Soft Serve false cypress for year-round color.

**5. Plant in masses of three, five or seven of the same kind of plant.** This gives your landscape a cohesive, professionally designed appearance. Plus, weeds cannot grow if desirable plants are already taking up the space, eliminating that notoriously tiresome garden chore. Planting in groups of odd numbers is a designer's secret for a bold statement that doesn't feel too formal or fussy.

**6. Mulch.** A two- to three-inch-thick layer of shredded bark mulch not only gives your landscape a pleasing, finished look, it conserves water by reducing evaporation. It also keeps plant roots cool and shaded, allowing for healthy, vigorous growth that resists pests and diseases naturally.

**7. Don't be afraid to replace the plants that take too much of your time, or those that you don't really like, with new, easy-to-grow shrubs.** At [www.ProvenWinners-Shrubs.com](http://www.ProvenWinners-Shrubs.com), there are so many improved varieties available now that there is little reason to settle for anything else.