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EC56-1201 Landscaping

Victor J. Miller

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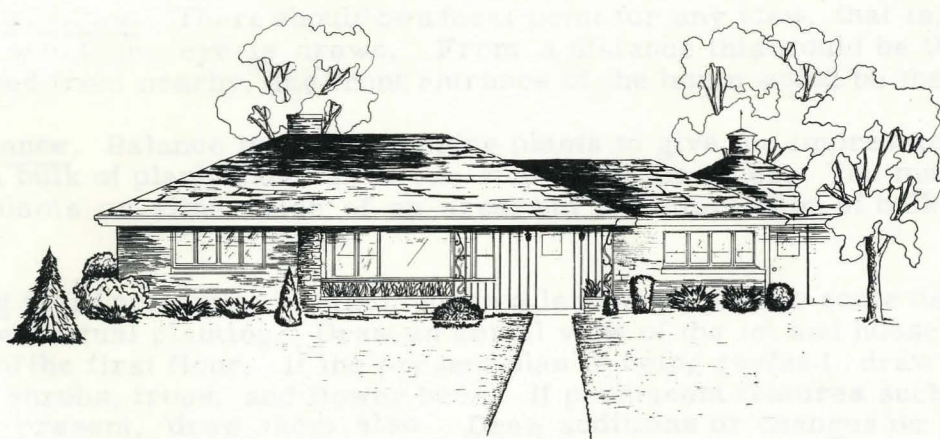
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Landscaping

Victor J. Miller



EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COOPERATING
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The material in this circular is taken from Extension
Circular 54-1200, "Woody Ornamentals and Their Use."

Landscaping

Landscaping involves the planting and arrangement of a homestead for maximum use and beauty. Although beauty is the primary aim, you must also provide for such utilitarian objects as drives, walks, clotheslines, garbage cans, etc. Figures 1 to 4 illustrate the types of arrangement that may be made on various sizes and shapes of properties. No kinds of plants are specified in the drawings. These should be selected from the lists in the preceding section.

The five principles you should follow to achieve good landscaping effects are:

1. Simplicity. Keep your plantings simple. When shrubs and trees are small, there is a tendency to plant too many of them. This leads to overcrowding when they get bigger. Do not clutter open expanses of lawn with such things as shrubs, flower beds and iron dogs.
2. Scale. Select shrubs and trees that will be the right size for your home. Tall shrubs and large trees can be used around a large house and in large areas; but low-growing shrubs and smaller trees will be in better proportion with a low house.
3. Sequence. Arrange plants in sequence according to their height. Flank taller shrubs with lower growing ones.
4. Focalization. There should be a focal point for any view, that is, some central feature to which the eye is drawn. From a distance this would be the home itself. When viewed from nearby, the front entrance of the home would be the focal point.
5. Balance. Balance means arranging plants to give the impression that there is as large a bulk of plant material on one side as on the other. You may use different kinds of plants on either side of an area; but the impression of bulk should be the same.

Keeping these principles in mind, make a landscape plan to scale on paper before starting your actual planting. Draw an aerial view of the lot and house, including the floor plan of the first floor. If the present plan is being revised, draw in the outlines of existing shrubs, trees, and flower beds. If permanent features such as drives and walks are present, draw them also. Draw additions or changes on the plan before any actual plantings are made. Divide the home grounds into three separate areas according to use. These are:

The public area. This, as the name implies, is the area to the front of the house which the casual passer-by sees. Its arrangement is similar to that of a painting. A good uncluttered lawn furnishes the foreground of the view. The front walk of homes being built today is generally laid from the front door to the drive rather than to the public sidewalk. Shade trees should frame the house. Plant them well in front of the corners of the house and, if possible, slightly to the side. This is impractical on a narrow city lot. In such a place, each yard should have one tree that helps frame both its owner's house and his neighbor's house. Each house is thus framed with two trees.

The foundation planting in front of the house should help blend the house in with its surroundings and focus the gaze on the front entrance, the center of interest. Upright formal shrubs are used on each side of the front entrance and usually larger ones at the corners of the house. Lower-growing shrubs are planted along the foundation.

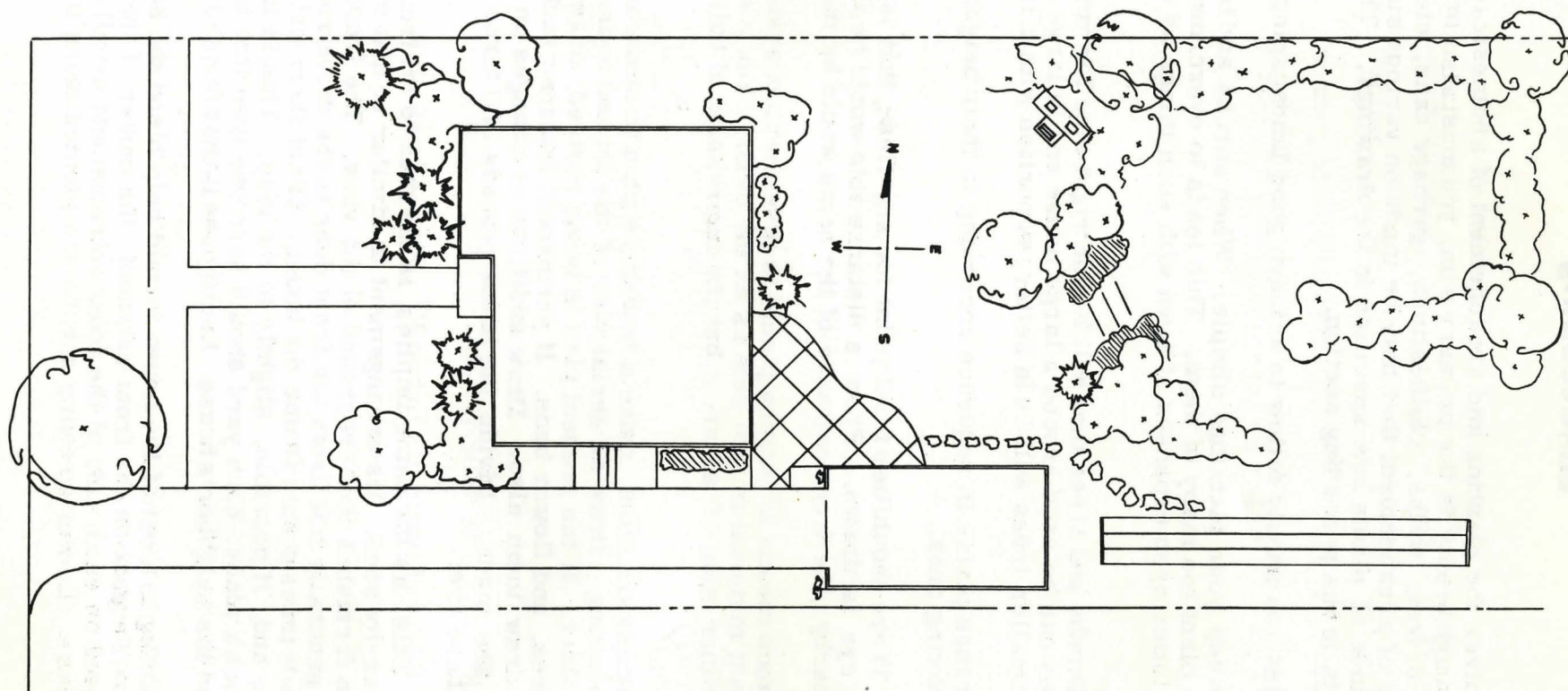


Figure 1. --The landscaping of a city home on a small lot.

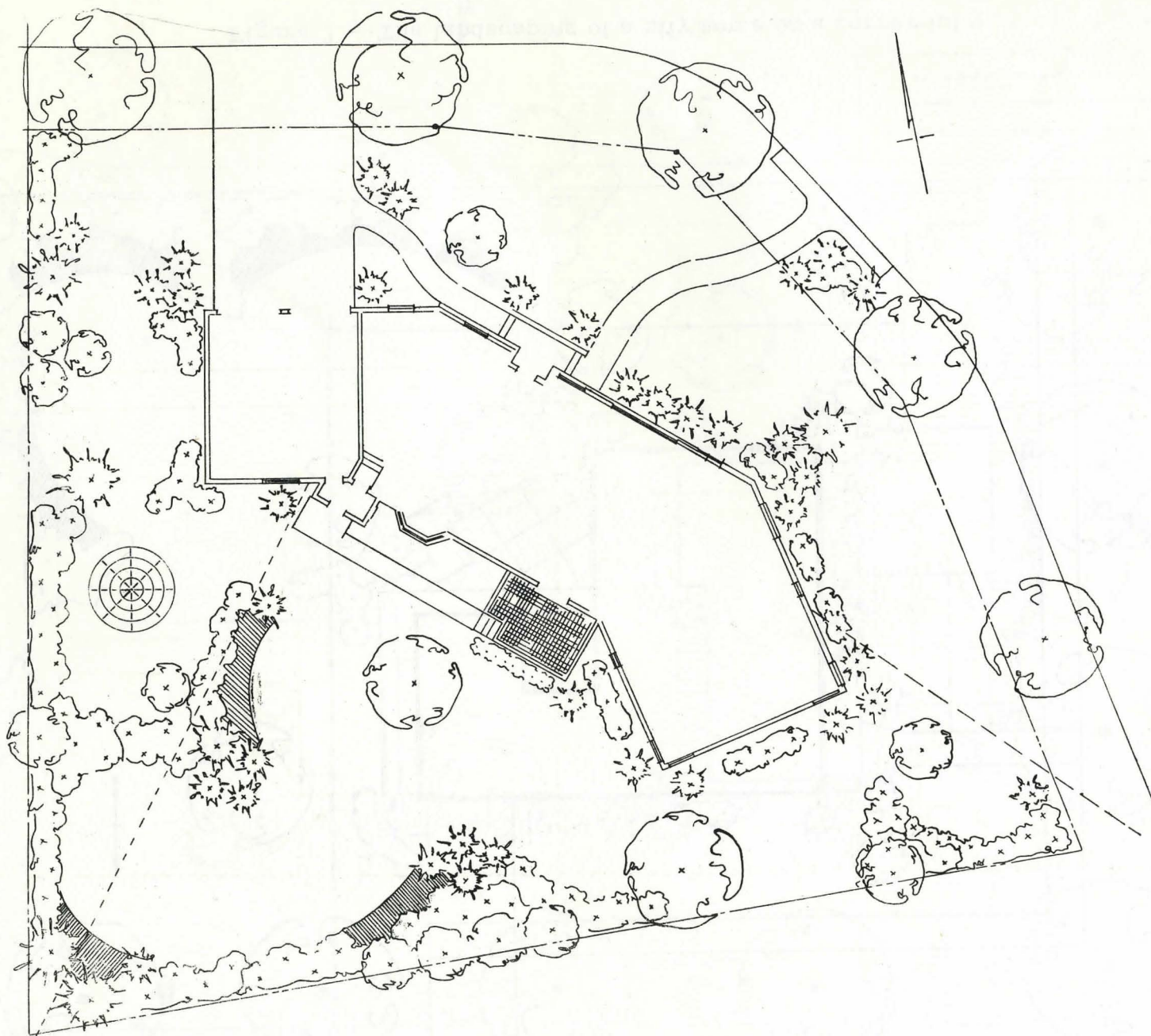


Figure 2.--The landscaping of a city home located on a curving street.

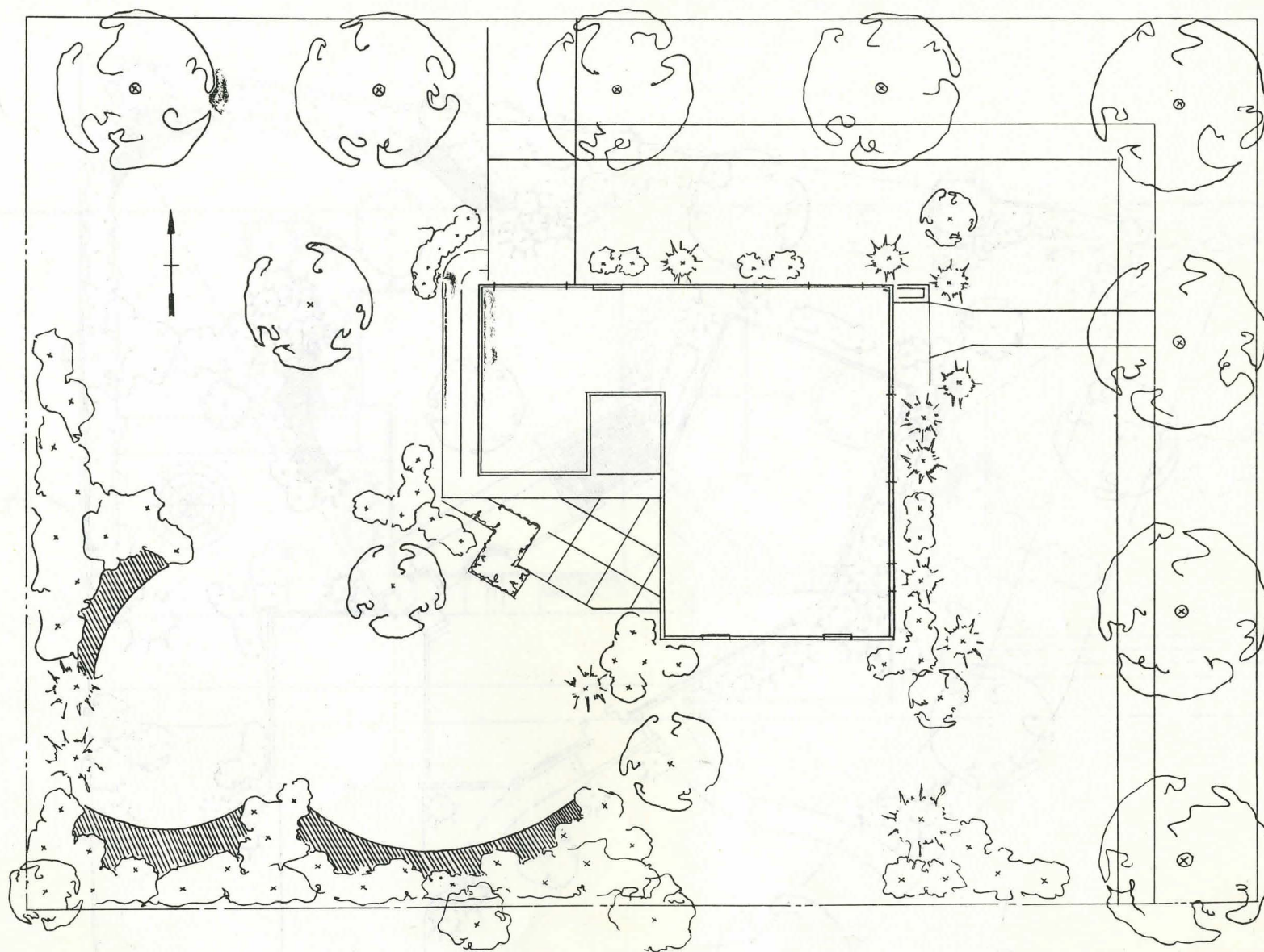


Figure 3.--The landscaping of a city home on a corner lot.

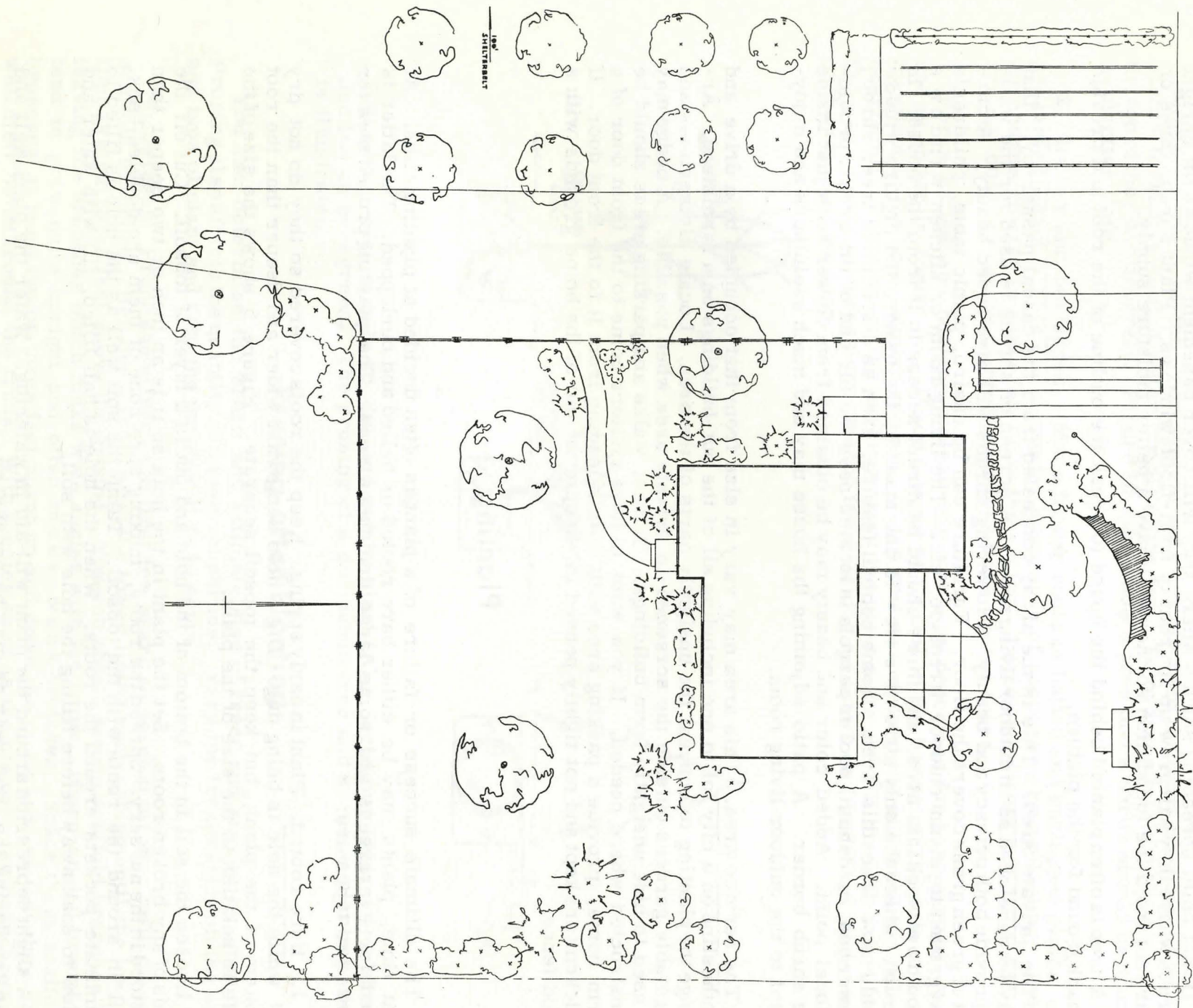


Figure 4. --The landscaping of a farm home.

Do not plant spreading shrubs where they will cover basement windows or upright shrubs where they will grow up in front of first-floor windows. Plant shrubs three or four feet from the foundation so they will have a better moisture supply.

A tree is often planted behind the house to break the outline of the roof and provide a background for the picture.

The private area. This is the area, concealed from the casual passer-by, that may be developed as an outdoor living room. A screen of shrubs is used for the walls to provide both privacy and beauty. Flowering shrubs will give added beauty. A carpet of green grass covers the floor. Furniture can be chairs, picnic table, children's playground toys, an outdoor fireplace, etc. The living room or kitchen window should overlook this area, and there should be direct access to it from the house. In the city, where the only attractive view is one made by the owner, the picture window would also face this area. Some central feature, such as a specimen tree, shrub, flower bed, bird-bath, pool or pergola is located near the far end of the area to provide a focal point. Added color and beauty may be obtained from flower beds just inside the shrub border. A patio adjoining the house may add much usefulness and enjoyment to the outdoor living room.

The service area. This area may vary in size from that occupied by a drive and clothesline on a city lot to one including all of the out-buildings on a farmstead. Arrange the planting to conceal the unsightly parts of the area. Locate clotheslines and vegetable gardens outside the screened-in private area when possible. A hedge may be used to hide unsightly farm buildings. Drives, walks and parking areas should be constructed where needed. If you want to have visitors come to the front door of a farm home, provide a parking area with a walk leading from it to the front door. If chickens are kept and not tightly penned in, keep them out of the home grounds with a good fence.

Planting

The ultimate success or failure of a plant is often decided at planting time. At that time, plants may be either bare rooted or balled and burlapped. The latter is used for evergreens and some large deciduous trees. The planting procedures for these two types are:

1. Bare rooted. Plant in early spring. Keep the roots covered so they do not dry out while the hole is being dug. Dig a hole somewhat wider and deeper than the root system of the plant, but keep the topsoil separate. Figure 5 shows the size of the hole in relation to the size of the plant.

Loosen the soil in the bottom of the hole and put in a layer of topsoil. Cut off the ends of any broken roots. Set the plant in the hole so it is an inch or two deeper than it stood in the nursery. Spread the roots, making sure none of them are doubled back. Fill in around the roots with the topsoil. Tamp the soil well as the hole is filled to eliminate pockets around the roots. When the hole is half filled, fill with water and allow to soak away before filling the hole with soil.

A slight depression around the plant will aid in watering. Water the plant well and as often during the first year as may be necessary.

Since so much of the root system was cut off when the plant was dug, it will be unable to supply enough water for all of the top. To overcome this difficulty, prune the top of the plant severely. Figure 10 shows how a tree and a shrub should be pruned at planting time.

2. Balled and burlapped. Many feeder roots of balled and burlapped plants are preserved intact. This gives greater assurance of success in transplanting. Evergreens are planted in early fall or in the spring. Deciduous plants are planted in the spring, but they can be planted later than bare-rooted trees.

For a balled and burlapped plant, dig a hole as described for bare-rooted stock and as shown in figure 5. Place a layer of topsoil in the bottom of the hole and set the plant in the hole, burlap and all. Tamp soil well around the ball until the hole is nearly full. Then loosen the burlap around the plant stem and fill the hole the rest of the way. Leave a depression at the top for watering as shown in figure 5. No pruning of the top need be done.

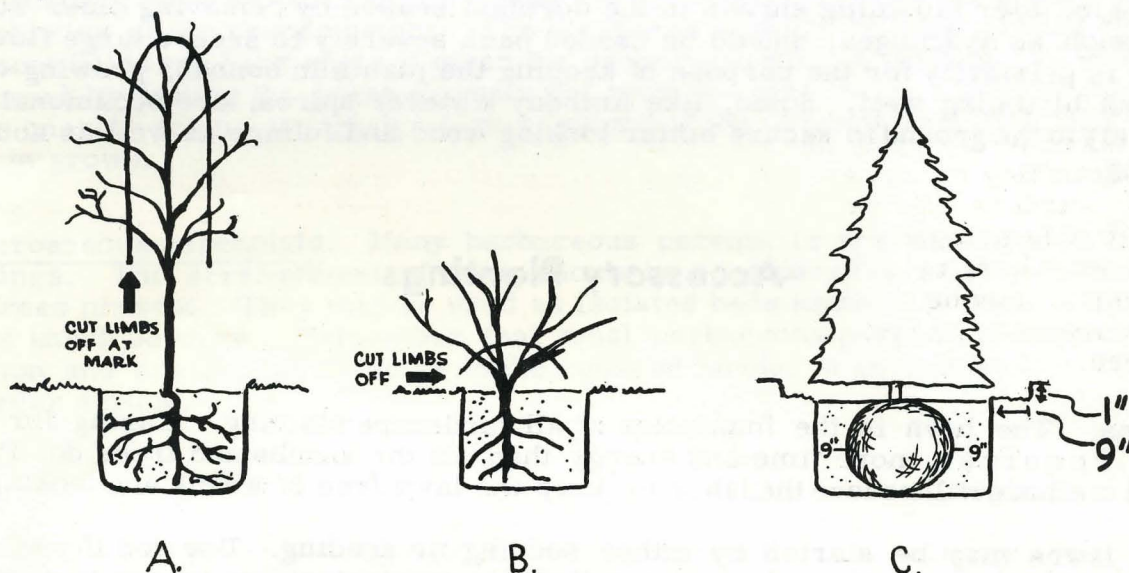


Figure 5.--Size of hole to dig and how to plant (A) a deciduous tree, (B) a shrub, and (C) an evergreen. The pruning of a deciduous tree and shrub at planting time is illustrated.

Pruning after Planting

You can determine the shape and ultimate size of trees and shrubs by pruning. Pruning also affects the quantity of bloom on shrubs. Vary the treatment with the age and type of plant and also the purpose it is to serve.

Shade trees. Prune shade trees the first few years to develop strong, well placed scaffold branches. Remove one or two of the lower limbs each spring until the lowest limb is eight to ten feet above the ground. You can obtain strong scaffold branches by leaving the branches which make wide angles with the trunk. Sharp-angled branches tend to grow quite upright and often make weak crotches. Space these scaffold branches at least two or three feet apart up and down the trunk and see that they are well distributed around the trunk. With species such as the pin oak, few branches are ever removed until the lower ones die because of shading.

Pruning in later life consist only of removing dead, diseased, or broken branches. Always cut these off flush with the trunk or back to another limb. If a stub is left, it will die and never heal over. Cover large pruning wounds with an asphalt emulsion paint every year until they have healed.

Shrubs. Prune shrubs to keep them neat and compact in appearance, for good bloom, and attractive twigs. In some cases, shrubs are pruned to keep them small. Vary the time and method of pruning with the habit of blooming. Some shrubs flower early in the season on old wood, while others bloom in the summer or fall on wood of the current season's growth.

The spring-blooming shrubs may be pruned some in early spring while the plants are dormant. This pruning consists of cutting out some of the older stems. Some of these stems, as forsythia, may be forced into bloom in the house. Immediately after blooming, cut off about half of the one-year-old wood to encourage the growth of new, strong shoots that will flower the following spring.

Prune the later blooming shrubs in the dormant season by removing older stems. Some, such as hydrangea, should be headed back severely to secure large flowers. Pruning is primarily for the purpose of keeping the plants in bounds, growing vigorously and blooming well. Some, like Anthony Waterer spirea, are occasionally cut completely to the ground to secure better looking wood and foliage as well as abundant flowering.

Accessory Plantings

Lawns. The lawn is the foundation of all landscape planting. Caring for lawns usually requires more time and energy than all the shrubs and trees do. Proper cultural methods will reduce the labor to keep the lawn free of weeds and looking nice.

New lawns may be started by either sodding or seeding. Use sod if you want a lawn in a short time, or if you have areas that are in constant use or are so steep they would wash badly. Sodding may be done from early spring to late fall.

You may seed either in the fall or the spring; but early fall seeding, about September first, is best. Break up the soil very fine before seeding. The soil may be tested for acidity. Most soils are alkaline enough; but if lime is needed it should be worked into the soil. Manure to furnish both organic matter and nutrients may be worked into the soil, or a complete chemical fertilizer may be used instead of manure.

Spread the seed evenly over the lawn with a seeder or by hand. Kentucky bluegrass is the most satisfactory lawn grass in Nebraska. Sow it at the rate of two or three pounds to 1,000 square feet of lawn. The new strain, Merion bluegrass, seems to be superior to ordinary bluegrass. Mixtures containing other, faster growing grasses as well as bluegrass are also satisfactory. After seeding, roll or lightly rake the lawn to cover the seed. Seed must be very near the surface, and kept moist in order to germinate. The best way to insure that the seed remains moist is to mulch the surface of the soil lightly with either straw or peat moss. Daily sprinkling is essential during dry periods.

Mowing is seldom necessary the first fall, but should be done if the grass grows over three inches tall. Set your mower to cut two to three inches high. Mow the lawn often enough that not over an inch of grass is cut off at each mowing. Then it is immaterial whether the grass clippings are left on the lawn or removed. If the grass has grown so tall that the clippings are unsightly or so heavy that they might smother the grass, they should be removed.

Apply fertilizer in both early spring and early fall. A third application, in early summer, will help keep the lawn green during the late summer. Nitrogen is the main element that lawns need. Apply one to two pounds of actual nitrogen to each thousand square feet each time you fertilize. A good fertilization with phosphorus every two or three years is sufficient for that element.

Whenever you water, do a thorough job--but water only when needed. Frequent waterings which wet only the surface inch or so of the soil encourage shallow rooting of the grass and maximum germination of crabgrass seed.

Lawns that have a poor stand of grass will usually respond to fertilization, water, and mowing at the proper height. The bluegrass spreads by underground stems and will soon fill in any bare spots if given the proper growing conditions. Lawns are not improved by letting the grass grow up and seed in order to get a thicker stand. The grass merely forms unsightly clumps instead of the desired even turf, and the seed seldom grows.

Herbaceous perennials. Many herbaceous perennials are also used in landscape plantings. The arrangement of these should be considered in relation to the shrubs and trees present. They may be used as isolated beds around the base of shrubs, or inside shrub borders. Remember that most herbaceous perennials require a sunny location and are not apt to thrive in the constant shade, or in competition with roots of larger shrubs.