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5 Key Questions for Choosing the Right Plant for the Right Spot

1. What is the purpose of the plant material?

Example: I am looking for plant material to landscape a butterfly bed that is 12ft long by 8ft deep.

Example: I need plants to install along my property line at a length of 126ft, in order to provide privacy between my property and my neighbor's.

Example: I am would like to plant a tree 10ft off of the western side of my back patio to provide a little afternoon shade.

Example: I would like to landscape my new home with plant material that is very southern and traditional in style.

Example: I would like to landscape around my pool, making it look like a tropical paradise.

2. What are the sunlight conditions?

Examples:

Full sun all day

Morning sun with afternoon shade

Morning shade with afternoon sun

Filtered sun all day

No sun all day, full shade

3. What are the soil conditions?

Examples:

High ground and dry soil

Low ground and wet soil

Sandy soil

Clay soil

4. What are some other factors that could affect the plant choice?

Examples:

Overhead or buried electric lines near planting site

Desire plants that shed very little to reduce mess around pool area

High Traffic area, especially for small children, so avoid using thorny plants

Plentiful deer population, so need deer resistant plants



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Desired plant needs to be installed in a area of landscape that is protected from the Northern and Western winds during the winter; create “microclimate”

5. What size should the plant material be when purchased for installation?

How much instant gratification are you looking for?

Does budget or time lend itself to using smaller material that will grow to size over time? Are you comfortable and equipped to provide TLC to help it grow?

If a shade tree is desired asap, then consider planting a larger specimen

When installing a larger scale project, consider buying a few larger sized plants for the focal points and smaller plants between

Now what?

Once you have answered the five questions, the rest of the process tends to be much simpler. The following are some basic design tips.

- Since plants grow, be sure to install plants which mature to a size and whose growth habits match the installation spot in reference to other plants and trees, buildings, patios, walk ways, etc.
- In most cases, install plants at least 3ft off the house to prevent having to trim shrubs in a flat backed manner. Also, this will leave room for maintenance on the home or building.
- When choosing plants, look for color and texture contrast so plants complement each other, instead of blending with each other. Each plant type should be a compliment to the plants and structures around it.
- If house or building is a bright color, install very dark plants on the foundation and then splash some brighter plants on the second and third layer away from the building to create contrast.
- Install plants with texture contrasts against or around soft, weeping or rounded trees and/or bushes, and vice versa.
- When creating a landscape design theme, make a list of plant material that fits that theme. If you are uncertain of themes, then simply walk through the Garden Center and make a list of plants that appeal to you. Then, take your list and your landscape through the 5 key questions.

Our friendly garden center staff would be more than happy to help guide you through making the right selections at any point in the process of answering the 5 Key Questions.