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Looking for Leisure Time? Choose Low-Maintenance Plants

Everyone wants a beautifully landscaped yard, but no one wants to spend hours maintaining it. Robust, low-maintenance plants are one of the secrets to spending more time enjoying and less time working in your yard.

Evergreen shrubs, like boxwoods and holly, are attractive and vigorous, yet surprisingly low-maintenance. Flowering shrubs like azaleas and rhododendrons give you added color and are just as easy to manage.

Planting evergreen and flowering shrubs is almost as easy as maintaining them. Choose healthy plants that are well suited to the growing conditions of the planting site. For help with selections appropriate for your area, talk with a local county extension agent. They give good advice and even come out and sample your soil to tell you which plants work best for your yard.

Before plunging your shovel into the ground, be sure to consider the mature size of the shrubs. Don't plant too close or too far apart. Dig a hole at least as deep and two times as wide as the plant's container. A good tip for measuring the depth of the hole is to line up the shovel against the plant's container. Dig to the depth where the pot reaches on the shovel. Place the root ball in the hole and fill with soil.

Strip the grass about 12 inches out around the planting hole,



then spread a landscape fabric around your newly planted shrubs. The fabric saves a ton of gardening time by blocking weed growth. It helps save water too. Add a two- to four-inch layer of mulch over the fabric to reduce surface evaporation and keep soil moist and cool.

Remember that low-maintenance doesn't mean no-maintenance. Even the easiest shrubs require water, fertilizer and the occasional pruning.

Young shrubs need about an inch of water each week. You'll need to supplement if there isn't adequate rain.

Straight and rounded hedges demand regular trimming. Let shrubs retain their natural shape so you can leave the trimmer in the tool shed. You'll be able to get by with a once-a-year shear.

Gardeners who rely on the secrets of easy landscaping are compensated with the precious prize of time.

Amazing Earthworms

Earthworms are beneficial invertebrates to have in your garden soil. They derive their nutrition from many forms of organic matter in soil, things like decaying roots and leaves, and living organisms

such as nematodes, protozoans, rotifers, bacteria, fungi. They also feed on the decomposing remains of other animals. They can consume, in just one day, up to one-third of their own body weight. The waste of worms enriches the soil, and the way they consume and

have soil pass through their body aerates the soil. Earthworms respire through the skin and require moist conditions to do so. During heavy precipitation they will come to the surface to breathe easier, which is why you may see many worms wandering when it rains.



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