



Colorado MASTER GARDENER

Water-Wise Gardening: Plan and Design for Water Conservation, Beauty, and Utility

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A landscape design for water conservation, beauty, and utility doesn't come by accident. Develop a plan before purchasing and installing plant materials. It's easy to make adjustments on the plan to fit desired outcomes. Once plants are purchased and installed flexibility is lost.

Create a Base Plan

Draw a simple, to scale, drawing of your property. A typical scale is eight or ten feet per inch.

On the drawing, identify site amenities. Include all exterior building dimensions, hardscape features (driveways, walks, patios, decks, etc.) and existing plant materials (trees, shrubs, flowerbeds). Identify above ground and below ground utilities that will impact potential plant placement.

On the drawing, identify site limitations. Identify sun exposure and wind patterns. Identify soil related issues such as surface water drainage flows, low spots, and slopes with potential for rapid water runoff.

If the home is on an expanding clay soil, identify restricted areas for planting and irrigation to manage the expanding soils. For details, refer to fact sheet 7.236, *Landscaping on Expansive Soils*.

Make a Bubble Diagram

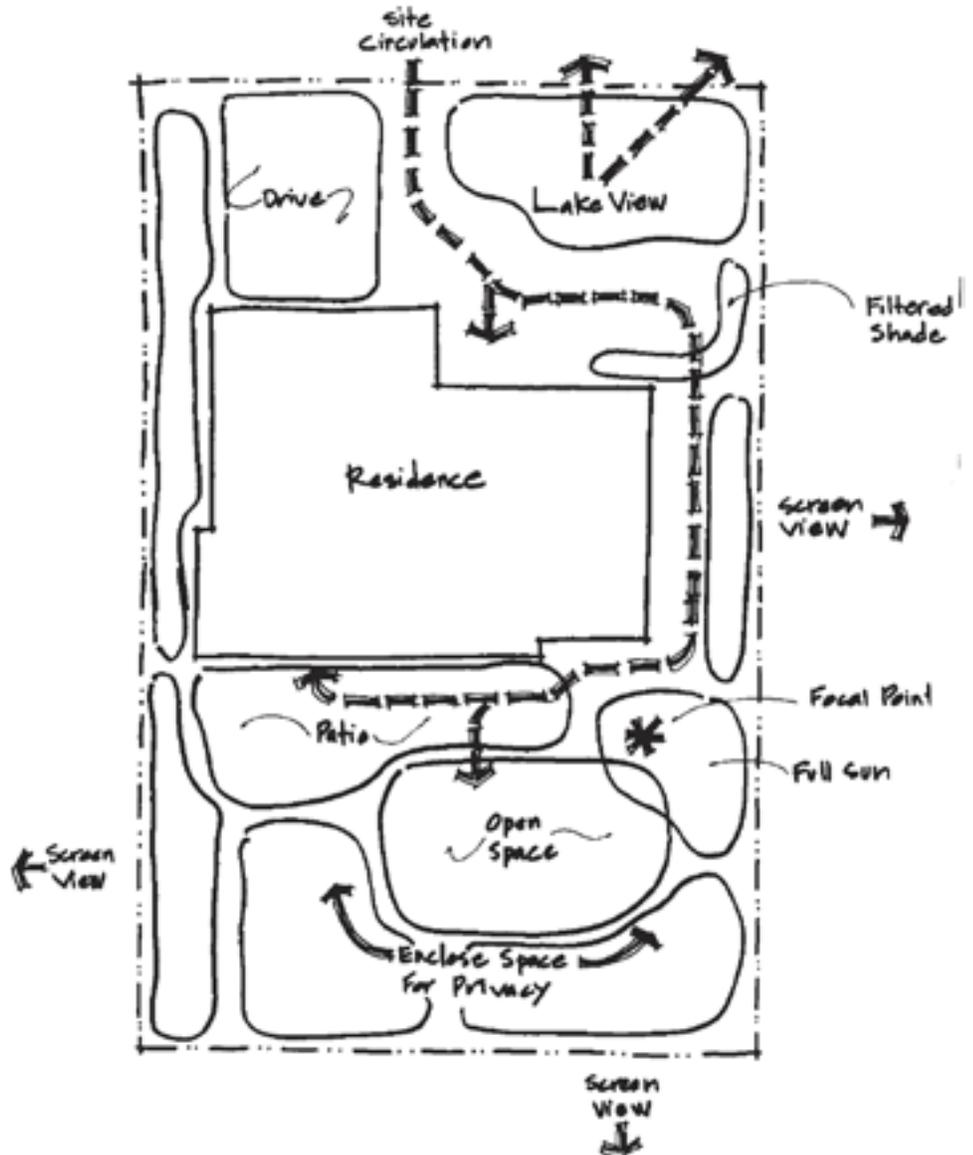
Define areas, or bubbles, with specific function and themes. Use tracing paper over the base plan to experiment with a variety of options.

A primary objective in design is to identify areas requiring routine irrigation, areas with reduced irrigation, and non-irrigated areas. Examples of bubbles include the following:

- Lawn areas.
 - Lawn areas where quality and beauty is significant to the function of the landscape design (high-input lawns).
 - Lawn areas where moderate quality and beauty are acceptable in the function of the landscape design (moderate-input lawn).
 - Lawn areas where quality and beauty are not significant to the function of the landscape design (low-input lawn).
- Shrub, flower and ground cover areas (non-turf areas).
 - Shrub areas with routine inputs.
 - Shrub areas with reduced inputs.
 - Shrub and flower areas with low inputs.
 - Flowerbeds with routine inputs (high input flowerbeds).

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- Flowerbeds with reduced inputs (reduced input flowerbeds).
- Ground cover areas with routine inputs.
- Ground cover areas with reduced inputs.
- Ground cover areas with low inputs.
- Home food production areas.
 - Vegetable garden.
 - Tree fruits and small fruits.
- Children's play area.
- Pet areas.
- Natural areas (areas left to natural plant materials).
- Service areas.
- Non-plant areas.



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Figure 1. Base plan with bubble areas identified.

Refine the Landscape Plan

Continue to explore a variety of design options. Next, convert the bubble diagram into a well designed landscape plan. Identify specific site details, planting beds, and hardscape features.