

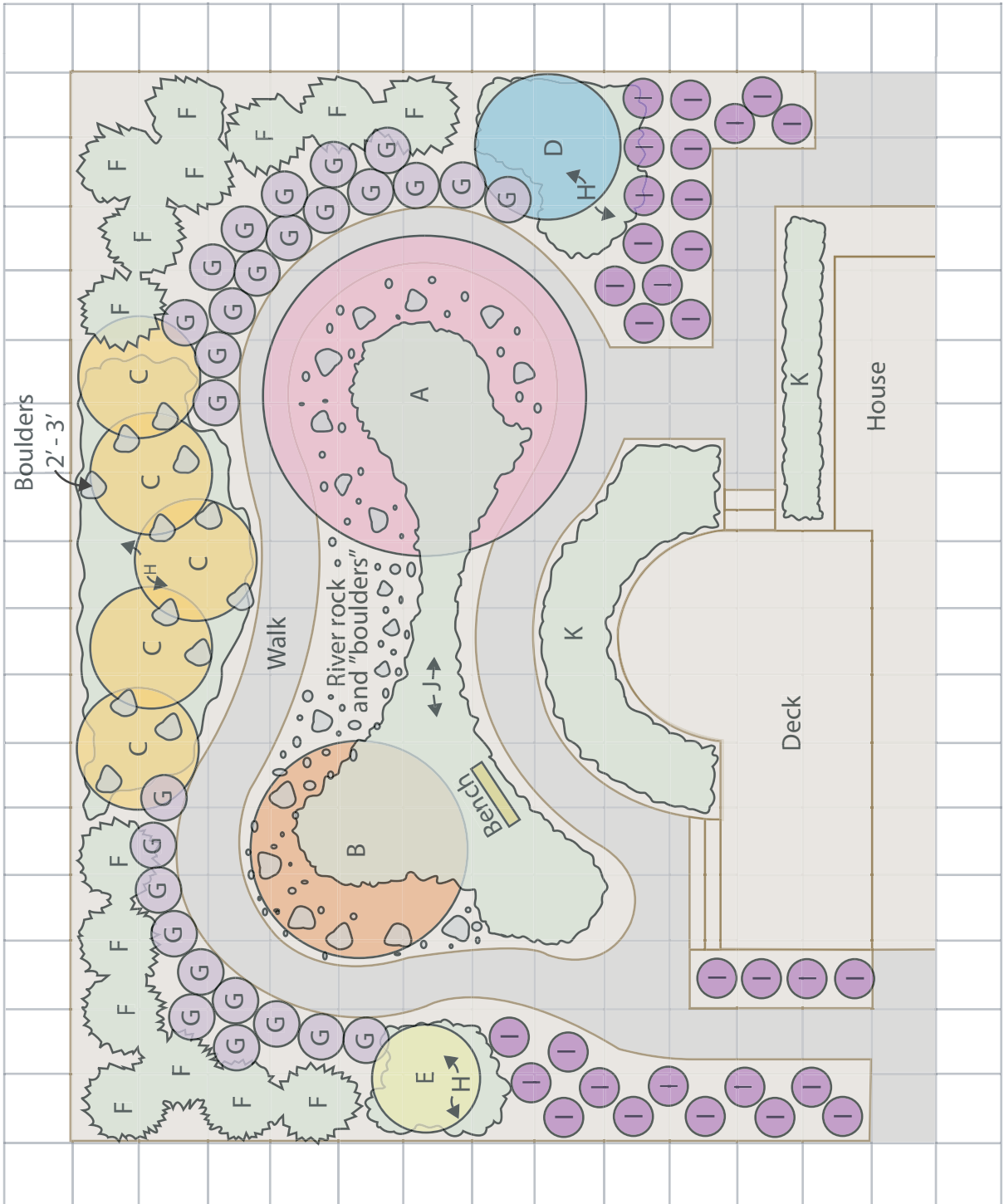
LANDSCAPE PLANS



Low-Maintenance Backyard

LOW MAINTENANCE DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN BORING. CHOOSING THE CORRECT PLANT MATERIALS IS THE KEY TO REDUCING YOUR WORKLOAD.

Choose native plants since they are tried and true for the climate. Do away with plants or materials that require daily or weekly care, such as grass that must be cut once or twice a week. And rather than choosing many different plants, choose many of a few plants that will make large, dramatic displays and that will need tending only a few times a year all at once.



1 square = 5 feet

Key to Planting Plan

This garden plan has been designed for maximum flexibility. The base plan includes general recommendations for plant types. This allows you to select trees, shrubs, and other plants that are suited to your location and your personal preferences. We have also included a set of suggested varieties for five regions. See below for more details.

Note: Dimensions are approximate mature height.

A Shade tree, large, 50+', 1

B Shade tree, medium, 30-45', 1

C Tree with upright, oval form, 25-45', can be deciduous or evergreen, 5

D Ornamental tree 15-20', 1

E Shrub, large ornamental 10-15', 1

F Shrub, large evergreen 5-10', 15

G Shrub, spreading low, or ground cover 1-3', 27

H Spreading shrub or evergreen, 12", number required depends on type

I Ornamental/native grass, height and number required depends on type

J Ground cover, mat-like spreader, 6", number required depends on type

K Mixed perennials, height and number required depends on type

Plant Recommendations by Region

The plants suggested below are arranged by general region of the country. Use the map as a general guide to the plant lists that might be best suited to your location. Because climate can vary substantially within each region, we suggest that you verify your plant choices with a local nursery or garden center professional. If a particular variety we list is not available in your area, your garden professional should be able to suggest a substitute.



MIDWEST

A Acer x freemanii 'Sienna' (*Sienna Maple*) 60', pyramidal, green foliage is burgundy red in fall, well branched requiring little pruning; Zones 3-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Fraxinus Americana 'Autumn Applause' (*Autumn Applause White Ash*) 45', seedless, compact, deep wine red fall color; Zones 5-8

Gleditsia triacanthos var. inermis 'Shademaster' (*Shademaster Honeylocust*) 50-60', fruitless and thornless, rapid grower; Zones 4-7

B Carpinus betulus 'Fastigiata' (*Pyramidal European Hornbeam*) 35', columnar when young, gray bark and green foliage; Zones 5-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Prunus maackii (*Amur Chokecherry*) 20-30', small tree with white flowers and black fruit (usually eaten by birds before fully ripe), golden exfoliating bark; Zones 2-6

Syringa reticulata (*Japanese Tree Lilac*) 25', creamy white flowers in June and July, deep green foliage; Zones 3-7

C Amelanchier x grandiflora 'Autumn Brilliance' (*Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry*) 20', white blossoms in spring, sweet purplish black fruit, red-orange fall color; Zones 3-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Thuja occidentalis 'Smaragd' (*Emerald Arborvitae*) 10-15', emerald green foliage holds color well through winter, upright pyramidal; Zones 5-8

Viburnum lentago (*Nannyberry Viburnum*) 20', upright vase shape, white flat-topped flowers in spring, blue-black fruit, purple red fall color, native; Zones 2-8

D Cornus alternifolia (*Pagoda Dogwood*) 15', rounded with horizontal branching, pale yellow flowers in May, blue-black fruit, red fall color; Zones 4-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Malus 'Lanzam' (*Lancelot Crabapple*) 8-10', red buds open to white flowers, gold persistent fruit; Zones 4-7

Syringa vulgaris 'Andenken an Ludwig Spaeth' (*Ludwig Spaeth Lilac*) 10-12', upright, single, reddish-purple flowers; Zones 3-7

E Cornus sericea 'Cardinal' (*Cardinal Red Osier Dogwood*) 8-10', rounded, grown for its bright red winter twig color; Zones 2-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Corylus avellana 'Contorta' (*Harry Lauder's Walking Stick*) 6-8', contorted and twisted growth; Zones 5-8

Cotoneaster divaricatus (*Spreading Cotoneaster*) 5-6', mounded, glossy green leaves, pink blossoms and red berries; Zones 4-7

F Juniperus chinensis 'Angelica Blue' (*Angelica Blue Juniper*) 5-6', bright blue foliage, densely branched and horizontal; Zones 3-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Juniperus chinensis 'Maneyi' (*Maney Juniper*) 4-5', semi-erect bushy form, bluish foliage, gray-green berries; Zones 3-8

Pinus mugo pumilio (*Mugo Pine*) 3-6', bright green, mounded form, hardy and rugged; Zones 2-7

G Forsythia 'Arnold Dwarf' (*Arnold Dwarf Forsythia*) 3', low ground cover, bright green foliage, greenish-yellow flowers in early spring; Zones 4-7(8)

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Rhus aromatica 'Gro-Low' (*Gro-Low Fragrant Sumac*) 30", low growing, small fragrant yellow flowers in spring, red hairy fruit, scarlet to orange fall color; Zones 3-9

Symphoricarpos x chenaultii 'Hancock' (*Hancock Coralberry*) 2-3', low spreader, dark blue-green foliage, rose pink berries in fall; Zones 5-7

H Euonymus fortunei 'Emerald 'n Gold' (*Emerald 'n Gold Euonymus*) 18", spreading, broadleaf evergreen, yellow margins on leaves; Zones 5-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Genista tinctoria 'Royal Gold' (*Woadwaxen*) 18-24", low growing, golden yellow flowers in July; Zones 4-7

Microbiota decussata (*Russian Cypress*) 12", dwarf evergreen, bright green turning bronze in winter; Zones 2-6

I Miscanthus sinensis 'Purpurascens' (*Flame Grass*) 3-4', upright green foliage turns reddish-orange in late summer and into winter, silky white plumes; Zones 4-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Pennisetum alopecuroides 'Hameln' (*Hameln Fountain Grass*) 2-3', fine-textured foliage, dwarf variety, whitish midsummer flowers; Zones 5-9

Schizachyrium scoparium (*Little Bluestem Grass*) 30", native prairie grass, upright blue foliage turns orange to wheat colored; Zones 3-10

J Ajuga reptans (*Bugleweed*) 6-9", purple, pink, burgundy, and/or green foliage, blue flowers in spring, sends out runners like strawberry plants; Zones 4-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Galium odoratum (*Sweet Woodruff*) 6", tiny fragrant flowers in May, whorled leaf pattern; Zones 4-8

Lamiastrum galeobdolon 'Herman's Pride' (*Yellow Archangel*) 12", yellow flowers in spring, silver and green foliage; Zones 4-8

K Mixed perennials such as aster, purple coneflower, liatris, penstemon, black-eyed Susan, and prairie dropseed

NORTHWEST

A Acer x freemanii 'Jeffersred' PP4864 (*Autumn Blaze Maple*) 50', upright, oval, brilliant orange-red fall color; Zones 4-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Acer macrophyllum (*Bigleaf Maple*) 60', dark green foliage has yellow fall color; Zones 5-9

Quercus kelloggii (*California Black Oak*) 30-75', large leaves, irregular trunk and majestic canopy, brilliant red, yellow, and orange fall color; Zones 6-9

B Acer platanoides 'Globosum' (*Globe Norway Maple*) 15', dense round form, medium green with yellow fall color; Zones 4-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Betula nigra (*River Birch*) 40', medium to dark green leaves turn yellow in fall; Zones 4-8

Chionanthus retusus (*Chinese Fringe Tree*) 20', broadly oval, deep green foliage, white fragrant clusters of flowers; Zones 4-9

C Oxydendron arboreum (*Sourwood*) 20', pyramidal, dark glossy green foliage, orange to scarlet fall color, creamy bell-shaped flowers; Zones (4)5-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Populus tremuloides (*Quaking Aspen*) 30', narrow and oval, light green foliage trembles in breeze, yellow fall color; Zones 1-6(7)

Viburnum lentago (*Nannyberry Viburnum*) 20', upright vase shaped, shiny green foliage, white flowers, blue-black fruit, purple-red fall color; Zones 2-8

D Acer ginnala (*Amur Maple*) 15-20', spreading, orange to scarlet fall color; Zones 3-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Malus 'Sentinel' (*Sentinel Crabapple*) 20', upright, white-tinged pink flowers, red fruit, Zones 4-7

Magnolia stellata 'Royal Star' (*Royal Star Magnolia*) 15', upright, white flowers; Zones 5-8

E Cotoneaster divaricatus (*Spreading Cotoneaster*) 5-6', spreading, rounded, glossy green foliage, pink flowers and bright red berries; Zones 4-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Hydrangea quercifolia 'Snow Queen' (*Oakleaf Hydrangea*) 6' broad and upright, large flower panicles take on a pink tint as they mature, large lobed leaves are purple in fall; Zones 5-9

Viburnum lantana 'Mohican' (*Mohican Viburnum*) 6', compact and globe shaped, heavy dark green leaves, creamy white flowers, orange-red fruit matures black, purple fall color; Zones 3-7

F Arctostaphylos uva-ursi 'Pacific Mist' (*Bearberry*) 3', evergreen, gray-green leaves, pinkish white flowers, bright red fruit; Zones 2-6

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Rhododendron macrophyllum (*Western Rhododendron*) 5-10', leathery leaves, pink to rose-purple large flowers, all parts are poisonous; Zones 5-8

Vaccinium corymbosum (*Highbush Blueberry*) 6-12', upright multistemmed, dark green to orange foliage, white flowers, blue fruit; Zones 3-7(8)

G Deutzia gracilis (*Slender Deutzia*) 2-4', racemes of whiter flowers in late spring, deep green leaves in summer; Zones 5-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Rhus aromatica 'Gro-Low' (*Gro-Low Fragrant Sumac*) 30", fragrant yellow flowers in spring, red hairy fruit, scarlet to orange fall color; Zones 3-8

Spirea betulifolia (*Birchleaf Spirea*) 24-30", white flowers before foliage matures, long yellow to bronze fall color; Zones 4-6

H Gaultheria procumbens (*Creeping Wintergreen*) 6", creeping evergreen with reddish winter color, pinkish white flowers, scarlet fruit; Zones 3-5(6)

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Mahonia repens (*Creeping Mahonia*) 18", evergreen ground cover, purple winter color, deep yellow flowers, black fruit; Zones (4)5-7

Vaccinium angustifolium (*Lowbush Blueberry*) 6-24", spreading, bronze-scarlet in fall, fragrant white flowers, blueberry fruit; Zones 2-5(6)

I Calamagrostis acutiflora 'Karl Foerster' (*Feather Reed Grass*) 5', showy plumes; Zones 4-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Deschampsia caespitosa (*Tufted Hairgrass*) 2-3', 1/2-inch-wide leaves, airy panicles are bronze to cream in spring; Zones 4-8

Molina caerulea subsp. arundinacea 'Windspiel' (*Moor Grass*) 2-4', forms large clumps, delicate yellow seed heads on 7' stems in July and August; Zones 4-9

J Athyrium niponicum 'Pictum' (*Japanese Painted Fern*) 12-18", gray, green, and red variegated fronds; Zones 3-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Galium odoratum (*Sweet Woodruff*) 6", tiny white blooms in late spring, whorled leaf pattern, old-time favorite; Zones 4-8

Sagina subulata (*Corsican Pearlwort*) 2-4", moss-like foliage, tiny white flowers in summer Zones 4-6

K Mixed perennials such as ferns, columbine, aster, bleeding-heart, Lenten roses, and primrose

NORTHEAST

A Acer saccharum (*Sugar Maple*) 45', upright to oval, medium green with orange, red and scarlet fall color; Zones 3-5

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Quercus palustris (*Pin Oak*) 40-60', dark green foliage is bright red in fall; Zones 4-8

Tilia cordata (*Littleleaf Linden*) 60-70', dense symmetrical tree, fragrant flowers in early summer, fall color is yellow or yellow-green; Zones 4-7

B Betula lenta (*Sweet Birch*) 40-50', glistening red to black bark, dark green leaves turn deep yellow in fall; Zones 3-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Maackia amurensis 'Summertime' (*Summertime Amur Maackia*) 18-20', upright, greenish white fragrant flowers, shining brown bark; Zones 3-8

Phellodendron amurense 'Macho' (*Macho Corktree*) 25-35', vase shaped, impressive leathery foliage, stout branches, corky bark, yellow fall color; Zones 4-7

C Amelanchier laevis (*Allegheny Serviceberry*) 25', upright, early spring white flowers, purple-blue fruit, orange fall color; Zones 4-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Amelanchier canadensis (*Shadblow Serviceberry*) 20', upright, gray-green foliage turns yellow-red in fall, white clusters of flowers, red-blue fruit; Zones 4-8

Viburnum lentago (*Nannyberry Viburnum*) 20', upright vase shaped, shiny green foliage is purple-red in fall, white flowers, blue-black fruit; Zones 2-8

D Cornus alternifolia (*Pagoda Dogwood*) 15', rounded horizontal branches, pale yellow flowers in May, blue-black fruit, red fall color; Zones 4-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Cornus racemosa 'Jade' (*Snow Mantle Dogwood*) 12-15', upright arching, light green foliage has purple fall color, white flowers, white fruit; Zones 3-6

Crataegus laevigata 'Superba' (*Crimson Cloud Hawthorn*) 15', thornless, red flowers with white center, red fruit into winter; Zones 4-7

E Cornus alba 'Bailhalo' (*Ivory Halo Dogwood*) 5-6', compact and rounded, variegated green and white foliage, red twigs in winter; Zones 3-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Corylus americana (*American Hazelnut*) 6-8', rounded, dark green foliage with yellow-green fall color, edible nuts; Zones 4-9

Cotoneaster divaricatus (*Spreading Cotoneaster*) 5-6', spreading and rounded, glossy green foliage, pink flowers, red fruit; Zones 4-7

F Ilex 'Sparkleberry' (*Sparkleberry Winterberry*) 12', deep green foliage, brilliant red fruit, use one Ilex 'Southern Gentleman' for pollinator; Zones 4-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Juniperus chinensis 'Maneyi' (*Maney Juniper*) 4-5', semi-erect and bushy, bluish cast; Zones 4-8

Taxus media 'Nigra' (*Nigra Yew*) 4-5', black-green needles; Zones 4-7

G Cotoneaster horizontalis (*Rockspray Cotoneaster*) 2-3', spreading, glossy dark green foliage, pink flowers, red fruit into winter; Zones 5-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Rhus aromatica 'Gro-Low' (*Gro-Low Fragrant Sumac*) 24-30', fragrant yellow flowers in spring, red hairy fruit, scarlet fall color; Zones 3-8

Salix purpurea 'Nana' (*Dwarf Arctic Willow*) 3-4', low growing, arching, soft bluish foliage, purple stems in winter; Zones 4-6

H Cornus canadensis (*Bunchberry*) 3-9", dark green in summer, reddish in fall, greenish white flowers, scarlet fruit; Zones 2-6

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Euonymus fortunei 'Coloratus' (*Purpleleaf Wintercreeper*) 8-12", evergreen ground cover with purplish winter color; Zones 4-10

Mahonia repens (*Creeping Mahonia*) 15", spreading, dull blue-green with purple winter color; Zones 5-7

I Miscanthus sinensis 'Purpurascens' (*Flame Grass*) 3-4', deep magenta blades in fall, upright silver plumes in fall; Zones 4-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Schizachyrium scoparium (*Little Bluestem*) 30", upright blue foliage, rich orange-wheat color in winter; Zones 3-10

Spodiopogon sibiricus (*Frost Grass*) 2-3', purplish fall color, purplish flower panicles in later summer, clump forming; Zones 4-8

J Hosta 'Ground Master' (*Ground Master Hosta*) 12-16", good for mass planting, green and white foliage, spreads by surface roots; Zones 3-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Alchemilla alpina (*Mountain Lady's Mantle*) 6-8", silver edged fan-shaped foliage; Zones 3-7

Sagina subulata (*Corsican Pearlwort*) 3-6", moss like foliage, tiny white flowers; Zones 4-6

K Mixed perennials including ferns, hellebores, coral bells, lupine, and aster

SOUTHWEST

A Cupressus arizonica (*Arizona Cypress*) 40-50', evergreen scales, red brown-olive bark; Zones 7-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Fraxinus velutina 'Fan-Tex' (*Fan-Tex Ash*) 50', olive green foliage is yellow in fall; Zones 7-8

Pistacia chinensis (*Chinese Pistache*) 30-35', dark green foliage turns orange-red in fall, smallish green flowers, blue or red fruit; Zones 6-9

B Cercis reniformis (*Texas Redbud*) 18', red-purple flowers, purple fall color; Zones 7-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Koelreuteria bipinnata (*Chinese Flametree*) 20', fragrant yellow flowers, pink fruit; Zones 6-8

Magnolia grandiflora (*Southern Magnolia*) 60', creamy white flowers, pods open to red seeds; Zones (6)7-9

C Rhus glabra (*Smooth Sumac*) 10-15', grows in colonies, pinnate deep leaves, red fruit, scarlet fall color; Zones 3-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Platyclusus orientalis (*Oriental Arborvitae*) 18', narrow upright, scale-like foliage, bluish fruit; Zones 6-9

Podocarpus macrophyllus (*Maki*) 20', upright, dark green, red-purple fruit; Zones 7b-9

D Corylopsis glabrescens (*Fragrant Winterhazel*) 8-15', dark green leaves and waxy underneath, fragrant pale yellow flowers; Zones 5-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Cotinus coggygria (*Smokebush*) 10-15', blue-green leaves, smoky pink pubescence from flowers; Zones 4-8

Ptelea trifoliata (*Hoptree*) 15-20', greenish white flowers, dark green foliage; Zones 3-9

E Cassia artemisioides (*Feathery Cassia*) 4-6', evergreen, silver-green needle-like foliage, yellow flowers; Zones 6-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Hibiscus syriacus (*Rose of Sharon*) 8-10', large rose, red, pink, or white flowers; Zones 5-10

Kolkwitzia amabilis (*Beautybush*) 8-10', arching branches pink flowers, persistent capsules; Zones 5-8

F Euonymus kiautschovicus 'Manhattan' (*Manhattan Euonymus*) 6-8', semi-evergreen, dark in summer, greenish white flowers in July and August; Zones 5-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Juniperus chinensis 'Pfitzeriana' (*Pfitzer Juniper*) 5', bright green; Zones 4-8

Juniperus chinensis 'Sea Green' (*Sea Green Juniper*) 4-6', arching dark green foliage; Zones 4-8

G Cotoneaster congestus (*Wintergreen Cotoneaster*) 3', evergreen, prostrate habit, small dark green foliage with gray undersides, white flowers, red-purple fruit; Zones 6-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Genista hispanica (*Spanish Broom*) to 4', leafless stems, fragrant yellow flowers; Zones 6-7

Raphiolepis indica (*India Hawthorn*) to 3', leathery glossy leaves, light pink flowers; Zones 8-10

H Cotoneaster salicifolius repens (*Dwarf Willowleaf Cotoneaster*) 6", dark green foliage turns reddish in winter; Zones 6-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Juniperus squamata (*Blue Carpet Juniper*) 12", low spreading, blue foliage; Zones 3-8

Mahonia repens (*Creeping Mahonia*) 12", low-growing evergreen, reddish color in winter, yellow flowers in spring, blue black fruit; Zones 5-7

I Artemisia abrotanum (*Southernwood*) 3', silver foliage, yellow flowers, fragrant evergreen foliage; Zones 5-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Muhlenbergia rigens (*Deer Grass*) 4', narrow blades, straw-yellow flowers on tall stalks in fall; Zones 6-9

Nolina microcarpa (*Bear Grass*) 3-6', narrow blades, sharp edges, curly strings at top, greenish white flowers clusters in spring; Zones 6-9

J Antennaria rosea (*Pussytoes*) 6", gray-green foliage, pink flowers; Zones 4-7

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Buchloe dactyloides (*Buffalo Grass*) 4-6", gray-green foliage, needs mowing only 4x per year; Zones 5-9

Delosperma cooperi (*Purple Iceplant*) 6", purple flowers in spring, succulent foliage; Zones 5-7

K Mixed perennials such as Marguerite daisy, centaurea, gaura, lavender, and salvia

SOUTHEAST

A Acer rubrum (*Red Maple*) 40', broadly oval, green foliage is yellow-orange to bright red in fall; Zones 4-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Fraxinus americana 'Skyline' (*Skyline White Ash*) 50', seedless, green leaves turn orange-red in fall; Zones 4-9

Metasequoia glyptostroboides (*Dawn Redwood*) 70', pyramidal with straight trunk, deciduous, bright green turning to brown, pendulous cones; Zones (4)5-8

B Cornus kousa chinensis (*Chinese Kousa Dogwood*) 20', vase-shape, white flowers, reddish fall color; Zones 5-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Magnolia x soulangiana (*Saucer Magnolia*) 20', large tulip-shaped blooms are pink, yellow, or white; Zones 5-8

Sapindus drummondii 'Narrow Leaf' (*Narrow Leaf Soapberry*) 25', yellow-white panicles of flowers, glossy green leaves, deep yellow in fall; Zones (5)6-9

C Amelanchier arborea (*Downy Serviceberry*) 15-25', upright, white flowers in early spring, purple-black fruit, yellow to orange fall color; Zones 4-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Carpinus caroliniana 'Pyramidalis' (*Ironwood*) 20-30', dark green leaves, yellow in fall; Zones 3-9

Lonicera fragrantissima (*Winter Honeysuckle*) 6-10', fragrant creamy white blossoms, dark red berries, dark bluish green foliage; Zones 4-8(9)

D Acer circinatum (*Vine Maple*) 15', round and low branching, glossy green foliage with pale undersides, red-orange fall color; Zones (5)6-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Chionanthus virginicus (*White Fringetree*) 12-20', profuse white blooms appear before foliage, yellow fall color, dark blue fruit; Zones 4-9

Magnolia stellata 'Royal Star' (*Royal Star Magnolia*) 10', compact and rounded, fragrant double white flowers, dark green foliage; Zones 4-8

E Aesculus parviflora (*Bottlebrush Buckeye*) 8', multistemmed upright, white flowers in summer; Zones 4-8(9)

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Hydrangea quercifolia (*Oakleaf Hydrangea*) 5-8', white flowers clusters turn pink then brown, burgundy fall color; Zones 5-7

Lindera benzoin (*Spicebush*) 6-12', light green foliage, yellow flowers, scarlet drupes; Zones 4-9

F Cleypa (Ternstroemia) japonica (*Japanese Cleypa*) 8-10', leaves emerge bronze, red mature to lustrous dark green, white flowers on previous years wood; Zones 7-9(10)

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Ligustrum japonicum (*Japanese Privet*) 6-12', upright habit, fragrant creamy white blossoms, black fruit; Zones 7-10

Myrica cerifera 'Fairfax' (*Southern Waxmyrtle*) 4-5', glossy green foliage; Zones 7-11

G Abelia x grandiflora 'Compacta' (*Glossy Abelia*) 3', pinkish white flowers, dark green foliage; Zones (5) 6-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Danae racemosa (*Alexandrian Laurel*) 2-4', refined evergreen, orange-red fruit; Zones 7b-9

Spirea x bumalda (*Bumald Spirea*) 2-3' bluish-green foliage, crimson flowers; Zones 4-8

H Spirea japonica 'Mertyann' (*Dakota Goldcharm Spirea*) 15-18", low and mounded, yellow tips, pinkish-red flowers in summer and repeating later; Zones 3-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Juniperus horizontalis 'Blue Chip' (*Blue Chip Juniper*) 8-10", prostrate evergreen with great blue color all season; Zones 3-8

Lespedeza bicolor 'Yakushima' (*Bushclover*) 12" tight mound of rose-purple flowers and small dark leaves, Zones 4-8

I Chasmanthium latifolius (*Northern Sea Oats*) 3', deep green turns bronze in fall; Zones 3-8

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Hemerocallis ssp. (*Daylily*) 14-30", grasslike foliage in clumps, summer blooms in pink, yellow, red, or cream; Zones 4-8

Pennisetum alopecuroides (*Fountain Grass*) 30", bottlebrush-like flowers turn purple-bronze; Zones 5-9

J Liriope muscari (*Lily Turf*) 12-18", lilac purple flowers, evergreen foliage; Zones 6-9

ALTERNATE PLANTS

Ophiopogon japonicus (*Mondo Grass*) 8-15", dark green grasslike foliage, light lilac flowers; Zones 6-9

Pachysandra terminalis (*Japanese Spurge*) 6-8", evergreen foliage, white flowers in May; Zones 4-9

K Mixed annuals and perennials such as purple coneflower, lily, phlox, and marigold

Before You Begin. Preparation is the key to creating a garden that will offer a lifetime of pleasure. Before you head to the nursery or lift a spade, take the time to review all garden plan materials. Ask yourself the following questions:

- **Do I have a suitable location for this plan?** The layout diagram shows the dimensions for the plan as designed. In general, you can enlarge or reduce the size of the garden by adding or eliminating plants, although the character of the garden may change if you alter the size dramatically.
- **Does my yard offer the right conditions?** Check the plant list carefully to see whether the plan will do best in full sun, partial shade, or full shade. Also make sure that the plants are suited to your USDA Growing Zone. (In many cases, the alternative plants list includes varieties that will grow in other zones.)
- **Does my soil need improvement?** Most plants will survive in a variety of soil conditions, but well-drained, moist (but not soaked) soil is generally best. To test your soil, wet it thoroughly with a hose, wait 24 hours, then squeeze a clump in your hand. If the soil forms a ball that holds together, but breaks up easily when you poke it with your finger, your soil is ideal. If the soil won't hold its shape when squeezed, it is probably too sandy. If the clump doesn't break up easily, the soil may be too clay. In either case, you can improve your soil by mixing in organic matter like compost or peat moss.
- **Is my soil's pH and fertility okay?** Check at your local garden store for a soil test kit, or inquire about testing at a local county extension service office. Follow the recommendations that come with your test results if you need to correct the soil's pH (how acid or alkaline the soil is) or fertility.

Creating the Bed. To lay out your bed, use a garden hose to mark the edges. When you are satisfied with the layout, use striping paint (available at many home centers) to mark the outline. (Or, sprinkle flour along the hose for a more temporary mark.) Using a sharp spade, dig along the marked line to set the edge of your bed.

If the garden location is currently covered with lawn, you have a couple of options. For smaller areas, you can strip the sod using a straight-edged shovel. To make this easier, wet the area thoroughly, then use the shovel to cut the lawn into strips that are the width of the shovel and about three feet long. (Expert tip: Sharpen the edge of the shovel frequently with a file.) Use the shovel to pry up and roll back the strips of sod. Once the sod is removed, you can loosen the underlying soil with a shovel or a power tiller.

For larger areas covered by lawn, consider using a heavy-duty garden tiller to grind the sod into the underlying soil. This has the twin benefits of adding organic matter to the soil and eliminating the need to discard or compost sod.

Regardless of how you are preparing your bed, be sure to use this opportunity to mix in organic matter (such as compost, peat moss, or rotted manure) and loosen the soil at least 6 inches deep, or even 8 to 12 inches if you can. Don't mix in fertilizer unless your soil test shows a need; in general, excessive amounts of fertilizer will do more harm than good.

After your bed is prepared, water it thoroughly and wait a week. This will allow some weed seeds to germinate. Remove these seedlings or dig them back into the soil. If you choose to use chemicals to kill the weeds, follow the instructions to the letter, including the time to wait after application before planting.

Edging. Most beds are easier to maintain if they have an edging that keeps surrounding grass or vegetation from invading. Choose plastic, metal, stone, or brick -- whatever you prefer. If you have lawn around your bed, consider also including a mowing strip, a 6- to 12-inch-wide swath of masonry or stone set even with the surrounding soil.

Planting. Now comes the fun part! If you have all of your plants on hand, keep them in their pots and set them out on the planting bed. This will give you a preview of how the bed will look and allow you to make adjustments. Use the tags that come with the plants to ensure that the spacing is correct. Don't worry that the bed looks sparse; the young plants need room to grow.

When you're satisfied with the arrangement, plant your garden from largest to smallest container (usually trees first, then shrubs, perennials, and finally annuals). Each plant type does best with a specific planting method:

- **Trees.** Dig a hole that is slightly larger than the pot or root ball and deep enough so the top of the root ball or pot is slightly higher than the surrounding soil. For potted trees, remove the tree from the pot, loosen the soil slightly around the roots, then place the tree into the planting hole. For balled-and-burlapped trees, loosen the burlap after the tree is in the hole, cutting away as much of the burlap as possible. When the tree is in place and straight, fill the hole one-third with soil, tamp firmly to make good contact between roots and soil, then water. Repeat twice more until the hole is filled. Make a shallow collar of soil around the hole to catch water and hold it near the root zone. Water the tree thoroughly by letting a hose run slowly for 30 minutes.
- **Shrubs.** Plant shrubs in a hole that's about twice the diameter of the root ball. The top of the root ball should be slightly above the surrounding soil level. Backfill with garden soil, tamping firmly to ensure a contact between soil and roots. Water immediately by slowly running a hose at the shrub's base for about 20 minutes.
- **Perennials and Annuals.** Set these plants in soil at the same level they were growing in the pot. Firm the soil around each plant with your hands, then water thoroughly.

Mulching. As you place each plant, it's a good idea to add mulch to conserve moisture, cool the roots of plants, and protect the soil from washing away in the rain. Organic mulches like shredded bark will require periodic additions as the mulch decays. Mulches like crushed stone are more permanent, but may not offer the character you prefer.

Aftercare. The first season of growth is the most critical for your garden. A good guideline is to water thoroughly every other day for the first two weeks, then twice weekly for the remainder of the first season. The following year, you can let nature take its course, supplementing dry periods with deep watering.

You should also be diligent about weeding your bed during the first year. As the plants mature and fill in, there will be fewer opportunities for weeds to gain a foothold. A thick layer of mulch will also help keep weeds in check.

Ongoing Maintenance. Most plants will thrive with only minimal care. Apply a general fertilizer according to package directions in the spring after growth has started. If you need to prune trees or shrubs to maintain their shape or size, do it in late winter before growth has started. The exception to this general rule is spring-flowering shrubs like lilacs that should be pruned immediately after flowering.