

LANDSCAPE SITE ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

Success with landscape plantings depends upon an orderly process of appropriate site analysis, plant selection and purchase, site preparation, planting procedures and post-planting care. Plants properly incorporated into an overall design can create a landscape that is environmentally-friendly, attractive and functional. Proper planning can save time, money and labor by decreasing future use of fertilizers, pesticides and water while minimizing pruning requirements.

It is crucial when landscaping or re-landscaping to first conduct a site analysis which consists of studying planting-site characteristics such as the amount of sun or shade, salt spray exposure, water drainage, compaction, soil type and pH. With a thorough understanding of the planting area, a gardener can properly plan a project. As a rule, it is better to select plants that are suited to the soil conditions on the site than trying to change those existing conditions. Research has shown that it is a complex and laborious process to change factors such as pH and soil texture. Most changes are only temporary and could lead to plant problems in the future and the need for fertilizer, pesticides and other inputs.

This checklist has been created to assist with identifying site factors that need attention and to facilitate proper planning. Utilized with other University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension publications, it is possible to design a landscape that is attractive and fulfills the needs and desires of the homeowner. Search for specific publications at edis.ifas.ufl.edu or contact your local county UF/IFAS Extension Office.

CLIMATE AND MICROCLIMATE CONSIDERATIONS	YES	NO	NOTES
Is the site in full sun? If so, for how long? Plants requiring full sun need at least five hours of direct sunlight for proper growth & flowering.			
Are there any existing plants or structures that block or reflect sunlight to the site? Study the patterns throughout the day, especially during the summer months			
Is there a prevailing wind that will keep the site dry?			
What are the temperature extremes for your region?			
Does the microclimate of the planting site change throughout the year? (Microclimates are created around buildings & under tall structures & trees).			
Is your planting site on the north side of a building, where little sun is available?			
Does the site receive exposure to salt? What is the level of exposure to salt? Does the area receive direct spray or is it protected?			



SOIL AND DRAINAGE CONSIDERATIONS	YES	NO	NOTES
What is the soil texture at the planting site? Sand, silt, clay, or a mixture?			
Is the soil texture consistent? If a lot of fill dirt has been added, it may not be consistent.			
Has the soil pH been analyzed? Many nurseries and UF/IFAS charge a nominal fee for soil pH analysis; ask them for instructions.			
Is there any construction debris in the soil? If so, remove it.			
Are there sunken areas on the site that may need to be graded or filled?			
Perform a soil drainage test. Does the drainage need improvement? Or, is it possible to select plants that survive with poor (slow) soil drainage?			
Are there eroded areas that need attention? Why are they eroded? Solve the problem prior to landscaping.			
Are there steep slopes that require retention walls or terracing?			
Does the area serve as a collection area for rain runoff? Can a rain garden be planted here, to collect and filter the runoff? Can a rain barrel be installed?			

SOIL AND DRAINAGE CONSIDERATIONS	YES	NO	NOTES
Above Ground - What may become a limiting factor?			
Building eaves			
Roads and driveways			
Sidewalks (concrete and/or natural?)			
Overhead utilities			
Windows / doorways			
Branches from trees			
Air conditioners			
Utility meters			
Existing plants			
Below Ground - What may become a limiting factor?			
Underground utilities - Call 811 or visit sunshine811.com to schedule an appointment ahead of time to have utilities located for no charge.			
Roots from other plants			
Will the sprinkler system need renovation before the plants are installed?			
Do you plan to install a permanent sprinkler system based on the new landscape design? Consider installing micro/drip irrigation to save water.			
Is there access to a water source for watering during the important plant establishment period? Consider using drip irrigation temporarily for this purpose.			

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	YES	NO	NOTES
Where are the property boundaries? Are there governmental rules limiting the distance you can plant from property lines?			
Are there utility or right-of-way easements near the site? Many governments need this access and do not allow the installation of plants or structures in easements.			
Does the area or specific trees have historical, environmental or landmark status? Do you know the limitations of such designations?			
Are there any illegal plant species? What are they? Visit fleppc.org/list/list.htm to find out			
Are there the federal, state or local ordinances? What are they?			
Are there home owner association deed restrictions that apply?			
Are there underground utilities near the site? Call 811 or visit sunshine811.com two full business days before digging to have utilities located and marked for no charge. This necessary step helps avoid expensive and possibly harmful problems.			

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS	YES	NO	NOTES
Do vehicle or pedestrian travel areas need improvement?			
Do walkways need to be widened? In areas of regular high traffic, it is best to "let them have it" and widen existing walks or create new ones.			
Are or will there be events or parties held in the area? How much open space is needed?			
Is there adequate space for recreational features, such as picnic or park benches, swing sets, bike racks, etc.?			
Is shade required in the planting area?			
Are there loading/unloading areas or features that need to be screened, such as trash collection and utility structures nearby?			
Is access to (or prohibition from) structures and other areas needed?			
Does the planting area need screening for wind, sound, sun or privacy?			
Is a patio or large entertainment area needed? Where is the best place to situate it?			
Does wildlife currently use the area and how will they be affected by the new landscape?			
Are features needed to benefit wildlife? Remember, the four essential features to help attract and maintain wildlife on your property are food, fresh water, cover and space. These requirements differ between wildlife species.			

EXISTING PLANT MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS	YES	NO	NOTES
Are there invasive exotic plants that need to be removed prior to planting? Visit fleppc.org/list/list.htm to find out.			
Are any plants showing stress symptoms, such as yellowing or no leaves, thin branching, dead or dying limbs, etc.?			
Will you be removing or trying to rejuvenate them?			
Is turfgrass trying to grow in deep shade (equal to or less than two hours of sunlight)? Most turfgrass species need at least five hours of sun.			
Does the lawn area need to be improved or removed? How much lawn is actually needed by family and pets?			
Can ground cover plants or a small area of mulch be used instead of turfgrass?			
Can planted areas be combined with others to improve appearance? Most times, it is best to keep existing, healthy, non-invasive plants and simply supplement the beds in which they exist.			
Does the planting area already contain too many plants? Is it too crowded or unattractive?			
Are there any plants that are native to Florida that should be protected and preserved?			

PROPERTY OWNER INVENTORY CHECKLIST	NOTES
What features are needed or desired by family members or pets? How much space is needed for each? Where will they be located?	
Vegetable or herb garden	
Compost bin	
Dog house and/or run area, grass area or other pet needs	
Swimming pool pump and filter area	
Clothes line	
Recreational vehicle storage (camper, boat, watersports equipment, etc.)	
Shed for storage of lawn equipment and other items	
Grilling/entertainment area, with sink or electrical outlets. What type of porous pavement material can be used?	
Patio furniture or benches	
Trash can and firewood storage	
Children's playground	
Shade	
Ornamental fish pond, fountain or sculpture area	
Other	
How much turfgrass is needed for children, pets and entertainment?	
Are wildlife features desired? What type of wildlife do you wish to invite?	
Where is the best place to locate specific wildlife features?	