

Gardening in Small Spaces – NOFA Summer Conference 2015

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- 1) Introduction
- 2) What is *your* “Small Space”?
Urban yard - Patio or courtyard - Deck or balcony - Roof of house, shed, doghouse... - Fire escape - Window box - Entryway - Tree wells & crevices - Indoors
- 3) Why do I need a plan?
 - Make the most of opportunities created by natural and man-made aspects of a site
 - Identify and solve problems
 - Work with, preserve, and improve natural and human systems (hydrology, soils, air, ecosystems, plant & animal life, natural resources, human – individual & communal – health & well-being)
 - Avoid frustration down the road (sun-loving plants in a shady area, a flooded basement from bad grading & impervious surfaces...)
 - Maximize beauty & aesthetics of the space
 - Communicate with those helping you to install and/or manage the landscape
- 4) Resources for a base map:
 - Plot plan
 - Municipal assessor’s database
 - GIS mapping
 - Professional survey
 - Detailed field measurements
 - Google Earth/Map (sort of)
- 5) Site Inventory
 - Boundaries - property lines, fences, walls, buildings
 - Paved areas/hardscape - walkway, patio, driveway, deck
 - Utilities - water spigot, AC, powerlines, meters, dryer vents
 - Existing vegetation – location, size, condition
 - Orientation – compass direction, watch the sun
 - Sun & shade - orientation, structures, trees
 - Types of shade - high, dappled, part-shade, deep shade
 - Reflected light & heat – walls, glass, pavement, plants
 - Changes in elevation - on site & between neighbors
 - Drainage
 - where does the water come from? where does it go?
 - downspouts, gutters, overhangs, topography
 - erosion, pooling, wet & dry areas
 - Microclimates – areas that have different temperature & moisture characteristics because they are exposed or protected
 - Prevailing winds in winter & summer
 - Snow - where does it accumulate? get piled? drop?
 - Noise sources
 - Lighting – for entrances & paths, night time activities, safety; excessive light from streetlamps or nearby buildings
 - Use
 - Activities – playing, grilling, eating, growing food, sitting, socializing, supervising
 - Storage – bikes, toys, tools, recycling, garbage, yard waste
 - Circulation – doors, gates, cut-throughs, dog & kid “tracks”, handicapped access
 - Views to keep or screen
 - Aesthetic conditions – broken pavement, worn grass

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6) Vision & Values

- What do you envision this space becoming?
- How do you want to use the space?
- What values do you want to guide your plan?

Do you need/want...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lawn | <input type="checkbox"/> Habitat for pollinators? Birds? Bats? Frogs? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parking | <input type="checkbox"/> Storage for bikes, toys, strollers, furniture, tools... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play structures | <input type="checkbox"/> Utility area for fixing things, washing the dog, hobb |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open play areas | <input type="checkbox"/> Space for garbage, recycling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paved areas | <input type="checkbox"/> Compost pile/enclosure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Privacy or screening | <input type="checkbox"/> Dining or sitting areas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protection from sun/wind | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Edible plants | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Groundcover | <input type="checkbox"/> Water |

7) Layout

Subdivided Spaces – Circulation - Changes in Elevation – Suspense - Borrowed Landscapes - Squeezing in Functionality

- a) One piece, many uses
- b) One plant, many uses

Food/medicine - Architectural use (shade, windbreak, focal point) - Nectar source -

Nitrogen fixer - Companion plant - Critter cover or feed - Beauty

Season-Extenders

- Light-colored, south-facing walls & windows
- Evergreens planted on the north side of the garden
- Protected nooks & corners

8) Design Tricks

Miniature Landscapes - Forced Perspective - Trompe l'oeil - False Doors & Windows – Mirrors - Covering Walls

9) Finding Space

Raised Beds - Climbing Plants - Tiny Green Roofs - Pocket Gardening - Living Walls - Planting Hardscape - Hanging Baskets (<http://windowfarms.org/>)

10) Tiny Technologies for Closing the Circle

Rain Gardens - Rain-Water Recovery (<http://www.rainxchange.com>) - Water Gardens – Bioshelters (<http://www.rhizomecollective.org/>)

Tiny Composting

- Sealed outdoor composter
- Bokashi (fermentation) bin
- Worm bin
- Check to see if public or private compost pick-up is available

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11) Container Gardening

a) The Nitty-Gritty

- Planting mix w/ low N-P-K
- Use reputable organic potting soil (e.g. VT Compost or Ideal) or make your own
- Coir, newsprint as alternatives to peat
- Weight of planting medium
- Fertilize w/ 4-4-2 or lower organic fertilizer (e.g. fish, cottonseed meal, compost tea)
- Want to make your own? Variety of recipes for organic potting mixes at: <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/potmix.html#appendix3>
- Ed Smith's self-watering recipe: 20 qt mature organic compost + 20 qt planting mix (peat/coir + vermiculite/perlite + limestone), amended w/ 1/3 c. bloodmeal, 1/3 c colloidal phosphate, 1/3 c green sand, 1 T azomite

b) Self-Watering Containers

Drainage - Water reservoir - Soil foot or wick - Tube for adding water - Sand if growing root veg

12) Plants for Containers

Cold-hardy perennials & woody plants (z3-4) - Dwarf varieties - Annual vegetables - Group plants w/ similar needs

- a) Hanging Planters: Strawberry 'Patio Temptation'; Tomatoes 'Tumbling Tom', 'Robin's Egg', 'Tiny Tom'; Bush beans; Cucumber 'Cool Breeze'; Herbs
- b) Window Boxes: Tomatoes from previous; Scallions; Radishes; Mesclun mix; Carrot 'Suko' or 'Parmex'; Herbs; Strawberries
- c) Coldframes: Lettuce, mesclun; Spinach; Scallions; Radishes; Chard (prefers to be in the ground); Mini carrots 'Kinko', 'Nelson', 'Purple Haze'; Endive
- d) Large Containers - 20"x26"+: Corn 'Luther Hill'; Squash, melon; Kale, kohlrabi; Potatoes & leeks – start w/ container ½ full, then hill up as they grow

13) Fruit for Small Spaces

a) Tree fruit (needs 2 varieties for pollination unless noted)

- Dwarf apples (M9, M27, Bud-9 rootstock) grow to 6'; columnar apples 'Scarlet Sentinel', 'Northpole', 'Golden Sentinel'; 2 varieties grafted onto the same tree ensure pollination
- Dwarf pears (on quince rootstock) grow to 8', can be trained as espaliers, cordons, fans; 'Moonglow' & 'Honeysuckle' are heavy fruiterers
- Dwarf cherries (Inmil & Damil rootstock) to 6', can be trained as fans (cut laterals to 4-6 leaves): 'NorthStar', self-fertile 'Stella', 'Lapins', & 'Sunburst'
- Peach 'Reliance', 'Red Haven' & 'July Elberta',
- Plums 'Superior', 'Early Golden', 'Damson', 'Stanley'
- Dwarf citrus – move indoors to a sunny location in winter; place on a saucer of gravel to keep humidified, and monitor for scale

b) Blueberries in > 20" pot (dump your coffee grounds right on them); low-bush varieties can survive in lower light than other fruits, though will reduce yields

c) Currants (where available) 'Perfection' 'Red Lake' 'White Pearl' can be trained as cordons (single stem, trained at 45-degrees)

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<http://www.pinterest.com/ayardandahalf>

<http://ayardandahalf.wordpress.com>

SUGGESTED READING

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