

More landscaping tips for tough economic times

Following up on previous columns on the growth of home gardens as one way to deal with our economic times, here are some money-saving tips on lawn and garden care.

They were sent to me from Steve Jacobs' San Diego-based Nature Designs Landscaping (www.naturedesigns.net):

■ Plant perennials instead of annuals. Annuals are short-lived, use excessive water and must be replaced, while there is a large selection of drought-tolerant perennials that can live for many years and offer plenty of beautiful color.

■ Eliminate lawn where you are not using it. Lawns are one of the most intensive maintenance and water-consuming plantings in a landscape, requiring weekly mowing, edging and recurrent irrigation.

■ Leave lawn clippings — don't bag. Many lawn mowers have a recycling feature which allows you to mow without bagging the clippings. Lawn clippings contain water and nutrients that can benefit your lawn. The result is a need for less water and fertilizer.

■ Prune naturally. When



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you prune for the natural growth habit of the plant, you will reduce the amount of pruning needed per year, resulting in decreased costs.

■ Cut back on water. Reduce your watering schedule to the bare minimum required to keep the yard and garden healthy. Overwatering can cause excessive growth, requiring even more maintenance, a higher water bill and a greater instance of disease that will require further intervention.

■ Identify and rectify irrigation problems. By keeping an eye on the condition of your irrigation system, including leaks, overspray, broken heads, incorrect water pressure and trajectory problems, you can reduce your water costs while also avoiding water damage to your home and hardscape.

■ Apply a ground-cover mulch to cut down on weeds

— and the need to purchase weed killers and the time to apply — and also water usage.

■ Select drought-tolerant plants. These plants, like the Mediterranean and native variety, will use less water and can require very little maintenance.

■ Put the right plant in the right spot. Install plants that can grow to maturity where they are planted with minimal care or pruning. Such “zone appropriate” planting will ensure the plant or tree won't outgrow its space and need to be frequently pruned or, worse, relocated at risk of losing the plant altogether.

■ Apply fertilizer modestly. Fertilize only as needed based on the requirements of your individual plants. If you have good soil, some of your plants may need little or no fertilizer.

Here is how to reach Action Line:

■ Mail: San Jose Mercury News, 750 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose, CA 95190

■ E-mail: actionline@mercurynews.com

■ Fax: 408-288-8060; phone: 408-920-5796; Twitter: http://twitter.com/action_line

■ Please include full name, address and phone number.

