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Use Landscaping to Create Sanctuary At Home

If your landscape just seem to “sit there and do nothing,” plant flowers and shrubs that draw wildlife close to you. Birds and butterflies attracted by a variety of blooms and berries bring delightful sound and movement to liven up your garden. Houston-hardy plants take turns with their seasonal show of color to give you a beautiful and successful landscape year 'round.

Homeowners now recognized value of landscaping to enhance curb appeal, provide privacy or create a mood for outdoor entertaining. With native plants in the right arrangement, our city spaces can offer habitat for wildlife, as well as a sanctuary for people in the midst of a big, busy city.

There is no such thing as a “no-maintenance” landscape, but a low-maintenance landscape is possible. Are you tired of trimming shrubs constantly so you can see out your windows or pass through a gate? Are you frustrated with insects plaguing your plants?

The solution is a landscape based on a selection of plants that grow and stay healthy where they are planted without too much extra water, chemical treatments or trimming.

The essential ingredients of a low-maintenance landscape are loose, porous soil, organic fertilizers and “the right plants in the right place,” all topped with local hardwood mulch.

Start your landscape renovations by blending a few Houston hardy shrubs and vines into your existing landscape.

Add a few Plumbago shrubs in full or partial sun to give you big clusters of blue blooms from March to December. Simply plant vines, such as our East Texas native, Carolina Jessamine along your fence. These yellow blooming vines will soften the view from your windows. Both, of these plants invite swallowtail butterflies to your yard

You can depend on shrubs with interesting foliage and flowers to give color without the fuss of flowerbeds. Contrast the dark foliage and hot pink bloom of the burgundy Loropetalum with a white flowering shrub such as “Bridle Wreath” Spirea or our native Virginia Sweetspire for a dramatic show in spring. Tuck in the delicate-looking but tough perennial pink Indigofera, in front of your established azaleas for added color. The Indigofera will bloom through summer into fall, while the azaleas are off-duty for a year. You'll find yourself wanting to walk outside to discover what is blooming next!

For an exciting red/yellow/orange scheme that attracts butterflies and ruby-throated hummingbirds, try combining *Harmelia patens*, “David Verity” cuphea, *Rudbeckia goldsturm*, daylilies and Mexican milkweed, with a backdrop of “Tangerine Beauty” cross vine. A more calming color grouping of blue, lavender and white-blooming plants could include beautiful *Agapanthus* lilies, trailing *Lantana*, society garlic, *Brunfelsia*, Yarrow and Texas native *Guara*.

A landscape can do more than offer a green skirt to cover the foundation of your house. If your landscape doesn't welcome you home after a hard day's work, it's time for a change. A landscape that is alive with color, the sound of birds and the fragrance of flowers provide refuge from workday worries and a place to connect to nature—without leaving home.

Janet Roberts Ireland is the owner of Home & Habitat, a local company that designs and installs unique Houston-hardy landscapes.

Visit www.homeandhabitat.com.