

The Naturalistic Garden

By: Eric Calhoun, Landscape Designer

Naturalistic gardens are a popular design trend in landscaping today. In designing a naturalistic garden, we as landscape designers, look to nature for inspiration. We look for regularly occurring patterns and themes and then integrate an artistic twist that will compliment your home. We impose order which serves to keep the plan neat and clean while ensuring unity and harmony in the design.

Internationally, naturalistic gardens have gained much headway through the work done by Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf. Oudolf is famous for his use of perennials at the Lurie Garden in Chicago's Millennium Park and the new High Line park in New York City. He is the best known practitioner of a recently coined planting style, the "New Perennial Movement." Oudolf's designs embrace two basic yet unconventional principles that define the New Perennial Movement.

The first principle is to place as primary the form and structure of a plant over its flowering potential. Conventional garden design uses plants for their flowers and color. However, Oudolf argues that a flower's bloom time is relatively short during the course of the year and therefore should be a secondary consideration to the plant's structure or form, which is present for almost a full 12 months out of the year. In addition to the traditional forms created by evergreens such as Boxwoods, Oudolf uses ornamental grasses and flower seed heads (such as found on Sedum and Echinacea after they bloom) to structure his plantings. By emphasizing more than just flower color, the garden's beauty evolves throughout the year, not just during the spring and summer when it is in bloom.

Oudolf's second guiding principle is to emphasize perennials over trees and shrubs. He gives preference to perennials because perennials are dynamic. In a single growing season a perennial will emerge from the ground and transform into a fully mature, flowering specimen. During that same growing season a tree or shrub will only grow a couple of inches. The cyclical nature of perennials transforms the garden each season from a static piece of art to a dynamic, evolving display of form and color.

While the naturalistic garden is not appropriate for every situation, Oudolf and the New Perennial Movement make the point that gardens are more than just plants and patios. Gardens are dynamic; they are the spaces where we experience the outdoors. As our gardens change so too does the ways in which we use them. The naturalistic garden and the New Perennial Movement embrace the idea that nature is cyclical and that gardens should be also. In this way these gardens provide a dynamic framework through which we can appreciate and experience the outdoors.



Continued Incentive Program for Turf Grass Clients

Nick Buysee, turf grass manager, and Biafore Landscape Development are offering a new incentive program to current turf grass clients. For each client that refers a potential turf grass client to our company that results in a signed contract, the referring client will receive a 5% discount on their turf services for the 2010 season.

- Referred services include: Turf care programs (fertilizations and weed control), crabgrass and grub control, turf renovations, and mowing.
- Discounts will apply up to 10%.
- Discounts will apply to one service only, i.e. mowing, renovation OR turf care.
- Referrals must lead to a signed contract.
- Please ensure that your referrals mention your name when that contact us.



'I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars'— Walt Whitman

Fall Turf Fertilization

By Nick Buysee, Turf Grass Manager

At Biafore Landscape Development we believe in educating the client. The purpose of this article is to inform the client as to why fall and late season turf applications of fertilizer are beneficial and necessary.

The fall application of fertilizer is quite possibly the most important one of the season. At this time in the fall your lawn has made it through the dog days of summer with probably some turf loss or stress due to the scorching summer temperatures. The fall fertilizer application will help your lawn recover from this impact. Some of the benefits of this application are: better fall and winter color, earlier spring green-up, increased shoot density, improved fall, winter, and spring root growth, and enhanced storage of carbohydrates or food within the turf plant. When the plant has extra food to store, it will be the first to respond in the spring with lush, green growth. Although extremely beneficial to the turf, late fall/winter fertilization will not produce much aesthetics while your grass is dormant. It will provide invisible benefits by pumping carbohydrates into the plant.

Root growth is extremely important to your turf grass. Fall aerification is a good way to help oxygen and water infiltrate the soil and create space for the roots to grow. The late fall fertilizer application provides an abundance of food for the plant. This abundance of food will give the plant enough nutrients to produce new root growth and root density while it doesn't need the energy to produce foliage.

Remember, what you have on the bottom (roots) is what you have on the top (grass). This is why Biafore Landscape Development strongly recommends the fall and late fall/winter fertilization.

Project Profile

Howell Residence

Morgantown, WV

By Eric Calhoun, Landscape Designer

In the spring of 2007 Stephen and Jennifer Howell decided they were ready to improve their landscape. They felt that their existing landscape lacked unity and cohesion and did little to enhance the appearance of their home. That year, a master plan was created that would guide construction of the landscape over the next 3 years. Using Biafore Landscape Development's design and installation expertise, the Howells turned an average looking suburban front yard into a dynamic, colorful, and cohesive landscape featuring colorful plantings, a water feature, an irrigation system, and landscape lighting.

One precondition to the landscape design was that the installation needed to be phased in over three years. To accommodate this request the master plan was designed and divided into three different parts and priced accordingly. The provided design and budgeting numbers allowed the Howells to prioritize their needs in order to plan and budget for future additions to their landscape. With the design and planning information provided, the Howells knew exactly what to expect in terms of cost and a finished product. Over the next three years, the original design and master plan was updated, modified, and improved upon before beginning each installation phase.

This past summer the final phase of the master plan was completed. The new landscape now brings together various elements of the yard in a way that compliments and accentuates the beauty of the Howell's home. Planting combinations repeated throughout the landscape tie together the front and back yards while the style and colors for the retaining wall now accent the home. At night, the landscape lighting splashes across the home and into specimen trees. A water feature sits beside the front entrance to provide the calming sounds of running water for guests. The final design brings together a variety of landscape elements to create a unified design that ties together the entire yard.

***'Despite the gardener's best intentions, Nature will improvise.'* ~Michael P. Garafalo,**

Plant for the Season

Itea virginica “Little Henry”

By Erin Hager, RLA

One of our new favorite plants at Biafore Landscape Development is a small, native, deciduous shrub with incredible fall color, *Itea* ‘Little Henry’. It is a newer compact version of *Itea* ‘Henry’s Garnet’, growing 2-3’ tall and 3’ wide. A rich green summer leaf turns a bright orange/red to burgundy/red in the fall. But beautiful fall color isn’t all this plant has to offer. In the early summer it will explode with pure white, long arching blooms. These slightly fragrant blooms will cover the plant’s loose mounded habit. A plant suitable for both sun and shade gardens, *Itea* ‘Little Henry’, also known as Virginia Sweetspire, tolerates moist soils and works well in mass plantings.

If you are looking for a new addition to your garden that offers year round interest, you may very well want to give *Itea* ‘Little Henry’ a try, and who knows, it may end up being one of your favorites too.



‘Plants give us oxygen for the lungs and for the soul.’ ~Linda Solegato

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