

Right Plant, Wrong Plant



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: For ideas of the right plant for the right place, take part in the Friends of Maclay Tour of Gardens.

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Choosing plants for your garden and placing them in the right spot is so simple and easy. “Right plant, right place” is what they say. Well, for me it is more like right plant, wrong place or wrong plant everywhere or dead plant right here. Or monster plant blocking the path and poking me in the eye. So what can be done to save the garden?

A good place to begin is with what NOT to plant. I often hear people say about an invasive exotic plant like coral ardisia or Chinese tallow, “but it’s so beautiful”. They also say, this plant is “vigorous” or a “great groundcover”. You may have a big area of your yard to cover and say to yourself, “that is exactly what I need”. Later on when stalker plant has revealed her true nature, you will have regrets.

Many of us have a giant shrub in a small space that SOMEONE planted years ago and every year we are cutting and cutting because the plant is just too big for the space. Shrubs seem to be the main offender in this category. The plant tag said the shrub’s mature height would be twenty feet, so why is it so hard to keep it at three feet?

Sometimes a plant which used to bloom doesn’t any more. Or a plant rapidly or slowly declines for no apparent reason. Did you get a bad plant? Are you a bad gardener? The amount of light and water a plant gets can be crucial. So can the type of soil in which it is planted. These problems can sometimes be fixed by moving the plant or watering or

fertilizing. Sometimes the plant we chose is not recommended for our area and will never flourish here.

My solution to the above mentioned gardening mishaps has always been to move the plant. One of two things happens. It gets better or it dies. Although I have learned a lot using this method, I don't recommend it. It's expensive and time consuming. I think it might work better to chat with knowledgeable gardening friends and local nursery personnel. Maybe a little on-line research is in order. The old fashioned way might work too – crack open some gardening and plant books.

What about a fun and exciting way to learn about plants and see examples of them used in various gardens? Come to the 17th annual Friends of Maclay Tour of Gardens on Saturday May 14. Breakfast, a plant sale and a silent auction begin at 9:00 a.m. at Maclay Gardens State Park. From 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. participants will tour eight private gardens at their own pace. To add to the excitement this year Maclay Gardens has teamed up with the Tallahassee Garden Club to sponsor a \$5000 Backyard Makeover garden which will be revealed for the first time as one of the eight private gardens. Tickets are \$25 and you can call Maclay Gardens at 487-4556 for more information. Come join the fun!

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