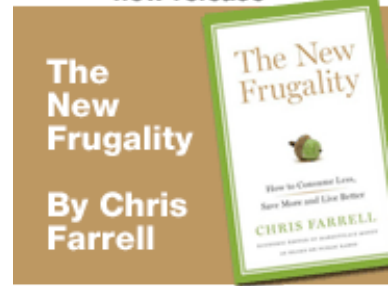




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Landscape with Shrubs Before Hot Temperatures Arrive, Says Dr. JimZ Gardening Expert

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Landscaping Advice: 'The first year, shrubs weep. The second year, they creep. The third year, they leap.'

Spring is the time to plant bushes and shrubs, the gardening favorites that become living statues in your landscape.

Bushes and shrubs anchor the landscape, and become more dramatic as they grow, points out Jos Zamzow, whose company makes Dr. JimZ Secret Formula all-natural fertilizers and related products popular in organic gardening.

Plant now so roots can get established before hot temperatures, he said. Then be patient.

"This is our landscaping advice: 'The first year, shrubs weep. The second year, they creep. The third year, they leap.' Remember that a shrub is spending all of its energy the first year adapting to its new surroundings," Zamzow explained.

The shrub needs as long as possible to establish its roots before hot temperatures. For example, don't wait until the Fourth of July weekend when most of the available stock is root-bound and it is too hot for the plant to establish itself easily. Fall, however, is an ideal time to plant shrubs and bushes so roots can establish themselves over the winter.

Before you buy a shrub, ask lots of questions from local gardening and landscaping advisers, Zamzow cautioned. "Is this the right plant for this place? Not just for this town and this climate, but for this specific place in my landscape? Will it brush against the house as it grows? Or do my landscaping plans call for something that will grow and block a fence line?"

"If I plant a row of shrubs, what will happen to my landscape if one dies 10 years from now? For this reason, it's a good gardening practice to mix species when you plant a privacy guard. If a 10-year-old plant dies, you may not be able to buy one that matches. If species are mixed, it's easier to replace a plant and still have a visually appealing landscape," he explained.

Once you have selected your shrub, dig a hole twice as wide and slightly shallower than the root ball. Leave the shrub

in its pot until you finish digging the hole. Don't unpot shrubs and let them sit in the sun while you finish digging the holes.

Then take your hand and loosen the roots around the edges of the root ball in order to break roots out of growing in a circular pattern. The motion is similar to scrubbing your scalp when you wash your hair, he explained.

Do not put the shrub any deeper into the ground than it was in the pot. Covering the top of the root ball with soil can cause it to suffocate.

Give the shrub a thorough soaking. Let water trickle for four to five minutes. Then let the soil settle and give it a second trickle of water for another four to five minutes.

Do not supplement the existing soil with any kind of soil amendment, he cautioned.

"If you create an especially nutritious environment around the roots, the roots will stay inside the planting hole. In a few years the plant will be completely root-bound. Instead, fertilize the soil in the root hole and the surrounding soil. Adding fertilizer to the surrounding soil is like dangling a carrot. It gives the roots an incentive to climb out of the hole. Root starters are unnecessary," Zamzow added.

As the shrub grows, thoroughly soak it with each watering. Longer, less frequent waterings are better than frequent, short waterings.

"Avoid encouraging shrubs to grow too quickly," he stressed. "Use a low-analysis, organic gardening product. You want shrubs to grow slowly and be healthy. You aren't trying to increase yield as you might in a vegetable garden. A fertilizer with a 5-5-5 analysis (nitrogen-phosphorous-potassium) is better for shrubs than a higher grade with a 15-15-15 analysis. We recommend Save-a-Tree, our low-analysis, all-natural and nonleaching fertilizer with trace minerals."

If you pick the right shrubs, he noted, they require very little maintenance. A Japanese barberry, for example, grows from two to eight feet high. Depending on the variety, it can bring drama to the landscape with bluish-green or purplish foliage, yellow flowers and red berries. It grows in every state, has almost no insect or disease problems and requires no maintenance other than minor pruning. In contrast, a boxwood hedge will require almost constant maintenance to keep its shape in the landscape.

Dr. JimZ Secret Formula Save-a-Tree fertilizer and related products are produced by TerraLife, Inc., whose owners have been making all-natural fertilizers and related gardening products for four generations. Additional information is available at www.drjimz.com.

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