

Ground covers-The landscapes quilt

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moss, leaf mold, compost, or well-rotted manure lighten clay soils and improve the water-holding capacity of sandy soils. Eight to ten bushels of organic materials per 100 square feet incorporated to a depth of 6 to 8 inches may be necessary in very poor or heavy soils. If you need to add a soil amendment, add it to the entire planting bed, not just to individual planting holes.

A soil test provides the best guidance for fertilizer usage. Without this information, a general rule would be to use 3 pounds of a commercial fertilizer such as 5-10-5 per 100 square feet. Mix the fertilizer into the soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches.

Most ground cover plants can be planted any time during the growing season, but either spring or fall is preferred. The arrangement and spacing of plants in the planting bed depends on the growth characteristics of the plant. Space plants so they will develop a uniformly covered area in a relatively short period of time. Plant in staggered rows, not straight lines, in both directions to get faster coverage.

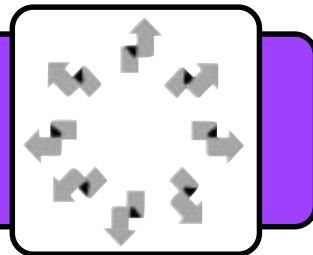
Plants that spread rapidly may be spaced much wider than slow spreading types. Spacing also depends on funds available and how quickly a complete cover is wanted. Spacings from 6 inches to 2 feet are most

frequently used. For example, if plants are spaced 4 inches apart, 100 plants will cover about 11 square feet.

Watering, weeding, mulching and feeding will be the main requirements of the new ground cover planting. Water during dry periods. An occasional thorough soil soaking is better than frequent light waterings. Occasional hand weeding with a minimum disturbance of the soil may be necessary.

A 1 to 2 inch mulch layer of leaf mold, compost or similar organic material will conserve soil moisture and reduce weed growth. (DJ)

Miscellaneous



Basil in the garden

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some of the more common types of basil.

Sweet Basil

Most common type grown. White flowers. Bright green leaves, 2 to 3 inches long. Upright habit. Clove like scent.

Purple Basil

Grown for its ornamental foliage as well as culinary use. Light lavender flowers. Same size leaf as sweet basil. 'Opal,' 'Red Rubin' and 'Purple Ruffles' are excellent selections.

Lettuce Leaf Basil

Large, wide leaves. Flavor is less pronounced than other green basil. Common varieties include 'Mammoth' and 'Green Ruffles'.

Lemon Basil

Lemon scent. White flowers and small green leaves. Great for tea and potpourri.

Cinnamon Basil

Cinnamon scent. Pink flowers, green leaves with purple stem. (MJM)

Focus on Food

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- **1 cup miniature marshmallows:** substitute 10 large marshmallows.
- **1 teaspoon dry mustard:** substitute 1 tablespoon prepared mustard.
- **2 tablespoons fresh onion, chopped:** substitute 1 tablespoon instant minced onion.
- **1 tablespoon finely cut fresh herbs:** substitute 1 teaspoon dried herbs.
- **1 tablespoon cornstarch (for thickening):** substitute 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour.
- **1 square (1 ounce unsweetened) chocolate:** substitute 3 tablespoons cocoa and 1 tablespoon fat. (AH)

EFNEP educating families since 1969...What is EFNEP?

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breastfeeding, and breastfeeding longer.

Behaviors improved

EFNEP's 30-year track record reveals outstanding achievements. In 1997, EFNEP graduates nationwide exhibited dramatic changes:

- 89% improved nutrition practices;
- 84% improved food resource management practices for their families; and
- 67% improved food safety practices.

*From Michigan:
"What I learned in EFNEP helped me get into our local junior college food service program, I've been working in food service ever since!"*

Effective teachers

EFNEP's success lies in the contributions of paraprofessionals who live in the neighborhoods where they teach, and who use a research-based curriculum coupled with hands-on experience. While other

agencies provide food and other services, EFNEP helps participants gain skills to maximize resources to better feed their families.

An Indiana EFNEP participant sums it up:

"I have learned how to save time, energy and money and how to make healthier choices on food for myself and my son."

(MB)

Fertilizing tree and shrubs

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cal fertilizers. Usually these plants tend to grow faster and larger than desired anyway. Additional soil nutrients will only compound the situation. In cases where soil tests or foliage-growth symptoms indicate that established shrubs need additional soil nutrients, you may use up to 1/2 pound of a low-analysis fertilizer per foot of height or spread, whichever is greater. For example, a six foot

wide spreading juniper could use up to three pounds of fertilizer, while a four foot high flowering shrub could use up to two pounds of fertilizer.

Spread the fertilizer evenly around the plant, covering the surface area below the branches, then incorporate into the soil. Follow with a thorough watering. Timing of fertilizer applications is the same as for shade and ornamental trees.

Soil injection of water soluble fertilizers is an excellent way to fertilize trees. Most "injectors" attach to the garden hose and are very easy to use. Their use does not require the drilling of holes as with dry fertilizers. Liquid "root feeders" are available from lawn and garden supply stores. Follow manufacturer's directions carefully. (DJ)

New plants to consider

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harvested when skin is hard and resists thumbnail pressure. Stems should be cut one or two inches from the end of the fruit. Twisting or pulling squash from the vine may break open the fruit, leaving it susceptible to decay. Usually squash should be picked prior to the first frost. Squash also can be harvested after the first light frost has killed the foliage. Squash can recover from light frost damage to the fruit which causes small water soaked spots to appear. If the squash has been subjected to temperatures below 50 degrees F for two weeks, the squash may break down and rot in a few weeks.

Gooseberries can be grown in almost all parts of Nebraska

where suitable soils are found. They bear some fruit the second and third years and a full crop the fourth year after planting. Three or four gooseberry plants will produce plenty of fruit for an average family.

Gooseberries need cool, moist growing conditions. The plants don't thrive in hot, dry places. Gooseberries thrive best in northern or northeastern slopes or exposures where it is usually cool and moist and protected from the hot afternoon sun. A north or east side of a building, fence, arbor or other partially shaded places also can be chosen.

Gooseberries are subject to mildew and should be planted where air circulation is good.

Since gooseberries blossom very early in the spring, don't plant them on low-lying lands or in pockets where late spring frost may injure the blossoms.

Gooseberries require a soil that is cool, moist, well drained and high in organic matter. The heavier soil types such as silt and clay are best. Supplement soil with additional organic matter. For vigorous growth the first season, apply well rotted manure in the fall or early in the spring. Thoroughly mix it with the soil.

After planting, apply a strawy manure mulch. The mulch should be deep enough to smother grass and weeds, about six inches. Add some mulching material each season to maintain the proper depth. (DJ)

Use an appliance thermometer to assure safe temperatures

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freezer is 0 degrees F or below, the food is safe.

Oven thermometers

An oven thermometer can be left in the oven to verify that the oven is heating to the desired temperatures. When cooking meat and poultry, it is important that the oven be set at 325 degrees F or higher. These thermometers can measure temperatures from 100 to 600 degrees F.

To check the accuracy of an oven, hang the oven thermometer from a rack in the center of the oven (you may have to adjust the oven racks). Set the oven for 325 to 350 degrees F and allow it to preheat. Once the oven has reached the set temperature, open the oven door and read the thermometer. The oven maintains its temperature by cycling on and off, especially if the door has been opened. Check

the temperature again after 5 minutes.

If the oven is not maintaining the set temperature, the oven thermostat will have to be adjusted by a service center representative authorized by the manufacturer. However, if, after testing the oven temperature at several settings (325, 350, 375, and 400 degrees F), it is consistently high or low by the same amount (say, 25 degrees F), this can be factored into the temperature setting. For example, if you know that your oven runs "hot" by 25 degrees F and you need to bake something at 350 degrees F, set the oven for 325 degrees F. Always check the oven thermometer to verify the temperature.

Source: Adapted from information provided by the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. (AH)



In memory of Dorothy Wiechert 1924-1999

A very "giving" volunteer I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service and my health to better living for my club, my community and my country. The 4-H motto wonderfully exemplified Dorothy Wiechert's life of generous service to her community as a 47-year leader/volunteer.

Her 55 years of membership and active involvement in extension clubs represent also a love of people and sense of "giving back" to the community her talents and skills. Those years of devotion meant sharing and enjoying young people and being a role model for her club members. Her extension club activities were a great way to learn new ideas and create new and lasting friendships with so many special people in her life.

4-H and extension clubs teach the best of life skills to all who would be interested in those best skills. It offers an investment of self for the future of many others in such positive ways. Dorothy lived her life working to improve the lives of others. She fully believed in making any place or project better than the way she found it. Her full life of family, church and community activities meant making many things better as she generously tackled many endeavors.

Her generosity of volunteer talents will be a legacy to many.

In memory of a special volunteer, a book will be assembled for the family. If Dorothy touched your life and you would like to share your thoughts in a letter, send it to Lancaster County Extension, Attention: Lorene, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln, NE 68528-1507. (LB)