

KPOV – *The Point*
Gardening: Get Good At It
“Some Good Things Not to Do – Part 1”
April 10, 2018

Even Master Gardeners make mistakes and kill plants...more than we'd like to admit. But we learn by doing and I have created a list of common garden mistakes that you might want to know about.

First - Choosing Plants that are Unsuitable for Central Oregon:

There's a reason you hear Master Gardeners and other experienced plant people go on and on about native plants and/or well-adapted plants: those plants thrive here. Gardeners in Central Oregon need to understand that we are in a very unique part of Oregon – our weather and soil conditions make it a little tougher to grow certain things. But that doesn't mean your choices are limited or boring. And sometimes just a good layer of mulch makes all the difference.

Next - Placing Plants in an Unsuitable Location:

Pay attention to the sunlight recommendations for plants. If the information tag recommends shade, don't put the plant in full sun. The same goes for moisture levels - don't place moisture-loving plants in an area that stays dry most of the time. Also pay attention to wind exposure and microclimates. Remember, if you plant up against a stone wall or dark surface, that wall will absorb a lot of heat during the day. Make sure any plants you place near the wall are heat-tolerant.

Improper Watering Techniques:

Now this is a biggie. Many gardeners water too frequently and too shallow. The proper way to water is **infrequently, but deeply**. If you have an automated sprinkler system for your landscape, place shallow, straight-edged cans (like a tuna can) throughout your yard. Run the sprinklers to determine how long it takes the system to provide 1" of water. If you find it takes 20 minutes per station to provide 1", run the system for two successive cycles of 10 minutes each, preferably in the early morning hours, once a week. Running two cycles allows the water to soak in better.

Over fertilizing:

In the case of fertilizers, more doesn't mean better. Overuse of synthetic fertilizers is especially dangerous because it can "burn" plants. It can also result in unnatural growth spurts which can in turn attract more pests and diseases.

More importantly, however, is the toxic runoff that results from watering excessively-fertilized plants and lawns. When large amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus are present in local streams, algae blooms are created that can, potentially, destroy ecosystems. So what can you do? Carefully follow application instructions provided on fertilizer containers. Another option might be to compost your grass clippings, leaves and yard trimming and use the compost as your fertilizer.

Excessive Pesticide Use:

The first thing many gardeners do after seeing insects on plants is reach for the spray. Gardeners should instead ask themselves a few questions:

What kind of bug is it? Is it harmful to the plant or not?

If the insect **is** considered a pest, does it warrant spraying? Is there an infestation on the plant or just one isolated bug?

Are there birds, or beneficial insects in the vicinity that might take care of the pest problem themselves?

There may be an underlying reason for the bug so check soil, moisture and light conditions.

If you do decide to apply a pesticide, always start with the least toxic, and always follow label instructions. Your local Extension Office can help identify your insect and answer questions about control methods.

For answers to all your garden questions, visit our website:

gocomga.com and click on the KPOV tab on the orange bar. This has been Gardening: Get Good At It. Thanks for listening.

Resources:

<http://mgofmc.org/docs/mistakes.pdf>

<http://www.ccmgatx.org/gardening-resources/popular-garden-topics/gardening-mistakes.aspx>

http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/sites/default/files/Horticulture/documents/gn1_co_client16.pdf

http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/sites/default/files/co_plant_resource_guide_0.pdf