

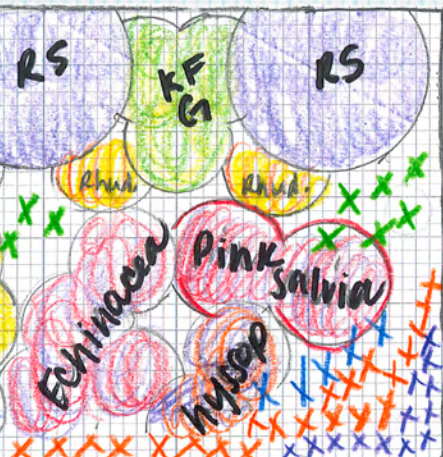
Sampling soil and sending it to a testing lab is easy, relatively inexpensive, and can save a lot of headaches in the long run. Contact your local UW Extension office if you need assistance in taking a soil sample or assessing sites.

Step 2: Create a plant list

The plants in a design can include trees, shrubs, annuals, perennials, bulbs, turf—the works. When choosing plants, consider light and water requirements; whether deer-resistant plants are necessary; whether selected plants are suited to the appropriate hardiness zone (zones 3–5 for most of Wyoming); fragrance; if it's important to attract pollinators; and how the plants look in winter. Also make sure to record the mature size of the selected plants (how tall and wide they are). This information will be used in step 3.

Step 3: Sketch it out

At this point, draw out the dimensions of the space on graph paper. The design should be drawn



to scale and include the obstacles and other non-plant elements from Step 1. Sidewalks, patios, and other existing structures take up space and it's important to portray them accurately. Once the space is drawn, add plant shapes.

Designing the layout for a space can be overwhelming, but some rules of thumb can help. Number one, don't overcrowd plants. Refer to the plant's mature size and trust it. Then, draw plants to scale on the design. Using stencils and coins, or other circular objects, can be helpful in visualizing the design. Coloring the plant shapes their dominant color is also a useful tactic. A simple box of colored pencils usually does the trick (look for erasable versions).

Make sure to consider plant color and what times of year each plant blooms. Flowers don't usually "clash" with one another, but some people prefer a more orderly landscape to the cottage look. Think about which you prefer before committing to a design. Although white isn't very colorful, it is more easily seen at dusk and could add important contrast to a design.

Keep in mind that the human eye prefers odd numbers. Try arranging plants in groups of three, five, or seven.

Consider windows or lines of sight and whether it's appropriate to obstruct unsightly objects or leave the lines open for desired viewing. Underground, consider

roots and potential impacts to foundations and utility lines. Tree roots often take the path of least resistance: depending on the tree and location, they can contribute to sewer or water line problems or structural damage.

Also keep in mind the level of desired maintenance—trees and shrubs that may need to be trimmed or pruned (and how often), perennial beds that may need weeding, and annuals that will need to be planted each year. Consider turf size and shape. Will it be a nuisance to mow?

This is also the time to draw in new hardscape additions like patios or walkways. Using materials like garden hoses can be helpful for imagining borders. Walking the space and viewing it at different times of day can also alter perspective.

Remember, it's important to spend adequate time on the design. This is the map for the project. If the plan is ever-changing, the efficiency of doing a little at a time and working the design together like a puzzle can be lost.

Step 4: Estimate costs

If the design is drawn to scale, plants can simply be counted to determine how many of each species is needed. Some plants may be available for purchase locally; others may need to be ordered from suppliers.

Most starter plants in 4" or similar pots cost between \$6 and \$20. Plants can also be started from seed and transplanted. If the design requires direct seeding of a "wildflower mix," use the square footage denoted on the seed packet to estimate cost.

When estimating costs, also consider the dirt work that may be required to level a space or amend soil, the addition of hardscape, and the cost of finishing materials like mulch. Knowing the costs of specific elements or sections of the design will help in making decisions about what to implement first. For example, in year one you might remove old, broken concrete and prep the soil. Then maybe the design naturally divides into three sections that can be implemented over the next three years.

In some cases, it might make sense to start at the back of a design and move forward or start by planting trees and work through shrubs and perennials, then finish with annuals. Planting trees and shrubs first can allow them time to establish and provide protection and shade for the plants that will grow in their shadow. Every design is unique and therefore requires a unique approach.

Step 5: Ready, set, plant

When it comes time to plant, following the "map" is helpful, but placing all the plants in their pots on the ground in the space is also recommended. This is one last chance to make minor adjustments before planting. Of course, plants can be transplanted later, but that delays their establishment

and could impact their survival, reducing the success rate.

Make sure that you have scheduled in enough time to plant and water all the plants. It is best to water the plants as soon as possible, especially if the soil is dry. If it's a large space, consider planting a section, watering, then continuing to plant.

Now, step back and admire your work!

Don't be surprised if you spot **Abby Perry** with a sheet of graph paper, spare change, and a box of erasable colored pencils this winter. She is the coordinator of this magazine and a University of Wyoming Extension educator based in Rawlins. She can be reached at (307) 328-2642 or ajacks12@uwyo.edu.

Resources for Wyoming landscapers

Landscaping: <https://bit.ly/BB-landscaping>

Trees: <https://bit.ly/UW-tree-planting>

Shrubs: <https://bit.ly/UW-shrub-landscaping>

Perennials:

- <https://bit.ly/WY-perennials>
- <https://bit.ly/wyoscape-xeric-garden>
- <https://bit.ly/uw-waterwise-garden>

Annuals: <https://bit.ly/WY-annuals>

Videos:

- *Barnyards & Backyards Live! Creating Landscape Beds:*
<https://bit.ly/BB-landscape-beds>
- *Barnyards & Backyards Live! Water-wise Landscaping (aka Xeriscaping):*
<https://bit.ly/BB-xeriscaping>

