



BY FRANK GESLANI

A SMARTER APPROACH TO LANDSCAPING

SUSTAINABLE SPLENDOR

JAMES LANDSCAPING

Beautiful yards take hard work. That comes as no surprise to those of us who spend hours under the hot Texas sun just to keep our yards modestly appealing. But beauty needn't be high maintenance. It is hard to believe given the seasonal extremes of our region. What if we told you that some of the most beautiful landscapes in North Texas started out as ugly, unusable eyesores—and that those same eyesores have now been transformed into highly functional, low maintenance, gorgeous outdoor retreats? You may not believe us, but maybe that's because you haven't met James Landscaping.

James Landscaping has helped homeowners save time, money and precious natural resources while making their outdoor spaces the envy of the block. How? By working smarter. Now, James Landscaping offers valuable insight on creating outdoor living areas that are easier to maintain, gentle on the planet, cost effective and more beautiful than you previously thought possible.



BEFORE

AFTER



HEALTHY SOIL, HEALTHY PLANTS

Fertile soil is literally the foundation of any beautiful landscape—and choosing the right fertilizer is critical. For James Landscaping, the natural choice is using organic fertilizer. “Synthetic fertilizers are high in salt,” shares Rhonda James, James Landscaping founder. Just as humans get more thirsty when they eat salty foods, so do plants. “So, switching to an organic fertilizer with a low salt content allows you to cut the amount of water you give your plants, thus cutting your watering time,” adds James. Here in North Texas, water conservation continues to be a major consideration. Even after periods of heavy rain, our water supply still remains too low given the region’s watering needs. “Don’t let late summer rains fool you. We were in extreme drought for most of the summer. Drought conditions aside, a water shortage may still be inevitable in just a few years due to the number of people moving to this area,” James emphasizes. Organic fertilizer addresses other issues besides water conservation. The high salt content in synthetic fertilizer

is a microbe killer. On the other hand, organic fertilizers—like the MicroLife products used by James Landscaping—assure that plants get the essential microbes and nutrients they need to thrive. With the fall season upon us, now is the perfect time to reassess your fertilization practices. Fall is an ideal time for final fertilizations as plants take root into the cold winter months. It only makes sense that they do so in healthy, nutrient-dense organic soil.

A TOTAL TRANSFORMATION

James Landscaping recently completed a local landscape project that proves the effectiveness and value of organic fertilizers (pictured). The property is lush with healthy plant life—due in large part to careful planning, plant selection and, of course, organic fertilizing—but it wasn’t always so picture perfect. The grounds had drainage challenges which James addressed with a combination of dry creek beds, French drains and retainer walls that create terraced areas to slow water down. “Solving drainage issues doesn’t have to be unattractive,” stresses James. “With the proper planning and vision, problem areas can become opportunities for beauty.” Poor functionality was another problem-turned-opportunity. The entire property was on a slope (which explained a lot of the drainage issues) and severely limited how the owners could use it. James Landscaping installed patio areas for entertaining. There were also a number of trees on the property, creating shade areas that made it difficult for grass to grow. Instead of chopping them down (which would have been a needless loss), they worked within the shaded areas by using plant beds with shade-loving ground cover and carefully chosen flora. “Interesting plants like ferns and wood

violets thrive in the shade, and depending on how much shade is cast and what the soil is like, you can plant things like azaleas, hydrangeas and cast iron plants. Native or adapted plants are also a solid choice. Just because a shaded area can’t grow grass doesn’t mean it can’t grow beautiful plants,” James advises. They also installed a new irrigation system with high efficiency nozzles and pressure regulating heads. The property didn’t have an existing system, so this addition was long overdue. However, even properties with existing systems can benefit from an upgrade. Property owners will see a long term cost benefit from more efficient watering, and they’ll be doing their part to conserve water.

PLANTING WITH THE SEASON

North Texas summers are brutal. So when fall finally comes around, we all take a collective sigh of relief. That goes for our plants, too. They take advantage of the rain and cooler temperatures to grow their root systems, which continue to grow through winter. This makes fall the ideal season for planting a number of species. It’s no surprise fall is a busy season for James Landscaping. If you’re thinking of calling them for a fall installation, you’re probably too late. They’re most likely booked up for the season. But it shouldn’t stop you from requesting a consultation. Depending on the project and the types of plants, winter and spring have their own sets of benefits. Certain perennials, for example, should not be planted in the fall because they don’t do well in the winter cold. Winter, however, is a good time to plant trees and shrubs. And spring is a popular season for an installation because it brings rain and mild temperatures, allowing plants to acclimate to their new surroundings. This gives them a head start going

into their first Texas summers, which everyone knows can be tough to handle. Plant availability is also better in the spring, and it’s the best time to install sod. “If you want to do a spring installation, we recommend starting meetings soon to get the design underway. It can take anywhere from 6–8 weeks to get a design ready,” suggests James.

Landscape projects—no matter which season you choose to begin them in—can involve a number of moving parts. The right landscapers take away most of the guesswork. They get their hands dirty so you don’t have to. By partnering with seasoned professionals like James Landscaping, time-strapped property owners can achieve the stunning landscapes of their dreams all while exercising smart, sustainable practices that keep plants and soil healthy and thriving for many years to come.

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