

A lower-maintenance yard can be key for homeowners



Carla Keast

AROUND THE YARD

There are a few simple ways of reducing the time and effort you put into your yard.

The easiest thing to do is cover all exposed soil with an organic mulch such as compost, bark chips, or chopped leaves. A five to eight cm layer is ideal. Think of it as a protective blanket. Weed seeds that are in the soil don't get enough sunlight for a vigorous germination. It prevents weed seeds that are blowing around from settling into the soil. The result is less weeding — a low-maintenance gardener's dream. Mulch also keeps the soil cooler, which most plants prefer, and slows down evaporation. So less time spent watering. Topping up the



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Covering your garden with organic mulch can be a good idea for those who want low-maintenance.

mulch is a yearly task so put it on your spring or fall to-do list.

Locate the right plant in the right place. That means matching the plant's optimum growing conditions to the light and moisture of the spot where you're locating the plant. Plants that are rated as hardiness zone two or three are the most likely to survive our winters.

Avoid plants that are referred to as 'aggressive' or 'self-seeding'. These are a low-maintenance gardener's nightmare. They can't wait to take over an entire bed, jump the edging, and move into the lawn. Gout weed heads up this list.

If you're using pots and containers, try

to locate them close together and within reach of the garden hose.

A little more work, but well worth the trouble, is installing edging along all your beds. Edging stops the lawn grasses from creeping into the bed and taking over. Use one that is approximately 15 cm deep (either contractor grade PVC or ACQ pressure-treated lumber) and install it properly. The top of the edging should be a bit above the top of the soil. Think of it as an underground wall, not a fence.

If you're adding edging, it's worth reshaping the beds to round up the free floating trees, shrubs, flower gardens, lamp posts, boulders, and put them into a

couple of larger beds. Straight lines and larger curves are easier to mow around than many small curves.

Adjust your expectations. No yard is no maintenance. A low-maintenance yard is probably not going to compete with the passionate gardener's yard but it can still look good. Enjoy them both, but know which one you want to spend your time tending.

Carla Keast has a Master's degree in Landscape Architecture and is a Winnipeg-based freelance landscape designer. She can be reached at contact@carlakeast.com

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