



# Gardeners Voice

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Naturescape, LLC

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What a great feeling it is to have a new year to start over with. With all the uncertainties of the world we are still looking forward to 2017. The sun will still shine and grass will still grow. Obviously, the latter will do better with our help and we are glad to be a part of that.

This past Christmas we bought a tree at the local farm that was a bit on the lopsided and barren side. The top had 2 leaders and we ended up cutting them both off and constructing a fake top to get our angel on it. We put our large ornaments in the empty spaces and filled the entire tree with ornaments and lights. Almost every ornament has a story so it's always a cherished time of year. We always get compliments on our trees and it struck me this year how with a bit of

work and ingenuity anything is possible. We all loved the wonderful pine scent it was giving off recently just before it started dropping needles. Removing it from the interior of our home at the time was unpopular.

It's similar to the time when I tell people they need to do some culling (removing a healthy plant growing in the middle of others) of their plants. We tend to install plants too close and large for their spaces because we want that instant gratification of having lush landscapes. You want a screen between you and your neighbors and you don't want to wait 10 or more years for it to be an actual screen. We all get that. A screen that does a good job now will be too close together in 10 years. If you allow them to continue growing into each other, your only option will be to remove them all

and start over. Believe me we have done this and it's both painful and expensive. This is where a watchful and trained eye can tell you things to do to avoid that. Culling is the most effective part of this process. Unfortunately, it's hard to sell this because it is uncomfortable to consider. A better process is a gradual culling but needs to be done long before it is actually seen as needed by the untrained eye.

We mark a tree for its eventual removal and gradually cut branches that grow into the other trees. We can only do this on properties we frequent since unbeknownst to noncustomers I don't lie around in my "spare time" thinking about their landscapes. (This is a remark on a comment I hear frequently by non customers, "I have a



horrible hill on the side of my driveway. In your spare time give me some ideas on what I should put there.”) Anyway, we get our best ideas about your landscape while we are at your landscape. While I’m pruning or weeding I’m thinking about how I can make things better for you. We’ve trained our employees to do the same. We teach them that you are their boss as well as we are. That’s why if you ask them to do something they will gladly do it. Since most of our work is hourly it’s usually not a problem. Details on each job are recorded so if the job is quoted there may be an added charge if the guys were asked to do an additional task.

Regarding the designs that are requested we charge a design fee so we can make the time needed to draw up plans and price them out. In our early years I dreamed of getting design work so I could sit on a lounge chair in the sun with a nice cool drink catching some rays. Isn’t it funny how you envision things? In reality I spend most of the time on the computer looking at photos of the job and drawing plans on paper and then in the computer. I then have to write all the instructions and place the orders for materials all in the office via phone or computer. I do get to go outside to pick up the plants but most of it involves driving to the job site and the farms that grow the plants. We are fortunate to have a good team of employees to do a lot of the heavy work but most of my sought after outside in the sun work is in the

landscape working hard and hiding from the hot sun. It’s actually quite comical. I’m certainly not complaining since the freedom to do these things sure beats the alternative.



Over the years we’ve done well as a team in the office getting out invoices and newsletters. Now that a lot of communication can be done electronically it’s faster and more efficient however, it’s the electronic forms that tend to be the least reliable. If we send something in the mail I know the recipient is going to get it albeit later than hoped for. Electronic forms are instantaneous; however, it’s these forms that are frequently missed. We have to spend more time following up with people to make sure they received our communication. So do us a favor please and respond to our initial emails for the season so we know you are getting them. I think this will also help your computer know that we don’t send spam. We won’t share your email nor send you frequent non essential letters. Also check out our Facebook page. If you like and join us you might see new tips or updates you will find interesting. Make sure you type NaturescapeCt in your FB browser. Or there’s always our website. ☺

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### Remember playing with bugs?

During one of the conferences I attended this winter I learned that bumble bees and butterflies are actually entering into the endangered lists. I knew we were having problems but to see the rusty patched bumble bee that was abundant across more than half of our states the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said, is now *"balancing precariously on the brink of extinction."*

Bees pollinate many crops we would surely miss if we didn’t have them. Imagine not having apples, blueberries, cranberries, cherries, cucumbers, pears, pumpkins, soybeans, squash, tomatoes, and watermelon! Approximately \$10 billion worth of crops in the U.S. every year are pollinated by honey bees!

In the spring we will be handing our study guides but if you would like an electronic version you can download one here.

<https://www.fws.gov/pollinators/pdfs/PollinatorBookletFinalrevWeb.pdf> Or here:

<http://pollinator.org/guides.htm> The quick take off from this is if you have an area of lawn that you can give up, create a garden filled with native species. Doing so will help our pollinating friends sustain themselves and help give our future generations the same earth we had as kids.