

Lawn & Garden



Leslie Lowe designed the dog pond at the Rogers WAG Dog Park in Whitefish, turning an inaccessible storm water detention pond into a puppy playground. (Courtesy of Leslie Lowe)

Landscape architect favors sustainable designs

By BRIANNA LOPER
The Daily Inter Lake

For Leslie Lowe, landscaping is more than a career. It's a passion, something she's had since she was young.

Lowe, who owns Beargrass Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning, with branches in Whitefish and British Columbia, believes in natural landscaping that melds seamlessly into the environment.

"What I'm getting to do is combine my love of the outdoors with my love of design," Lowe said.

This passion for design and the outdoors is what helped create the Hughes Rogers WAG Dog Park in Whitefish. Lowe worked with the Whitefish Animal Group for more than six years to create the 5.6-acre canine paradise, recently named one of the top 10 best dog parks in the United States.

The park includes paved trails, a pavilion, a fenced park for small dogs, and fountains, along with spectacular mountain scenery.

Most recently, Lowe helped plan, design and landscape a dog pond for the park, turning an inaccessible storm-water detention pond into a puppy playground. The pond opened in 2014, and has two beaches, large stones and landscaping that encourages the dogs to run in certain areas to prevent dete-

rioration of the land.

"I believe in wildlife enhancement," Lowe said. "There should be a flow, an interaction, between animals and space."

Lowe opened Beargrass in 2011 after becoming landscape architect-certified in both Montana and British Columbia. She received her master's degree in landscape architecture and environmental planning from Utah State University, and has worked throughout the Northwest and Canada to create holistic, sustainable designs.

When designing a yard or residential landscape, Lowe said she likes to start from the beginning, working alongside the home's architect to create the best view and flow for the home.

She prefers to sit down with the homeowner to discuss their intentions for the yard. Those who want to entertain will have a much different landscape than those who are hoping to grow a garden.

"The yard is really an extension of the house," Lowe said. "The relationship between the house and the way the yard is used is very important."

Next, she'll lay out a plan for the area, incorporating colorful plants to create a welcoming environment. Her favorite plants always include an abundance of native plants, as well as pollinators — plants that generate pollen plentifully and create flowering buds for bees.

One of Lowe's favorite projects has



A rendering of the plan shows the varying levels of the food forest Lowe helped to design for the Clear Sky Meditation and Study Center in British Columbia. (Courtesy of Leslie Lowe)



Lowe helped to restore a home that was flooded by a lake that rose above the official high water mark. The home was physically picked up and moved, and the grounds restored better than they were with Lowe's touch. (Courtesy of Leslie Lowe)

been the Clear Sky Meditation and Study Center in southeastern British Columbia.

The center hosts 310 acres of sustainable landscaping and sacred spaces integrated into the environment. One acre on the property hosts a food forest — a complete forest environmental system that provides diverse harvests and builds soil health. The mini forest has different layers, vertically and horizontally, in the same way a normal

forest would grow, with tall trees to shrubbery to mosses and grass.

"The idea was to duplicate nature's ideal forest," Lowe said. "It really was a neat project."

The entire forest is edible and allows for a variety of products.

➔ To learn more about Beargrass Landscape Architecture, visit online at www.beargrassla.com, or find the business on Facebook.

Diggin' In: May days the best for successful planting

By KATHY VAN MULLEKOM
Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

April showers bring May flowers and a month for the best planting time ever.

If you are putting in new plants, use these best-practice planting tips from Dan Nortman, Virginia Cooperative Extension horticultural agent in Yorktown, Virginia, and other gardening experts.

Honestly assess your space for new plants. A well-organized landscape with fewer plants looks nicer and is easier to maintain than an overcrowded, overplanted landscape.

Right plant, right place. Make sure that what you plant has the space, sun and soil that it needs to be healthy and vigorous. Also, make sure that plants with spines or poisonous plants are not in places where pets and kids can interact with them.

Buy plants that look healthiest. Struggling plants may be cheaper, but they usually continue to struggle in your yard. Look for plants that are free of disease or pests, and have healthy root systems.

Look to see if roots are coming out of the bottom of

the pot, or try to poke your finger into the soil; if you can't because roots are in the way, let someone else struggle with these plants.

Read plant labels. They tell you what conditions the plant type prefers and the horticultural zone that plant likes to grow in.

Variety adds spice to life. A diversity of plants makes your landscape more interesting, and helps make your yard resist diseases and bugs. If a disease destroys one type of plant, such as boxwood, and that's all you have planted, then you lose all plants. Think diversity in flowering perennial beds, foundation plantings and screen plantings.

Get creative. When you tire of the typical plantings of foundation plants, trees, shrubs and perennials, think how you can use plants in different ways. Some plants like drought-tolerant sedum can be used in artsy ways, such as wall art or to make green roof tops on garden sheds. For edibles, consider straw bale gardening for tomatoes and cucumbers and pretty trellises or arbors for vining crops like string

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Sedum can be used as a ground cover around the base of trees where grass will not grow, or as framed wall art. (Photo courtesy Hampton Virginia Master Gardeners)



Pea plant seedlings are on display. A lot of "sit-packs" of pea transplants would be needed for a row of peas, so just plant seeds instead. (Lee Reich via AP)

They'll expand your gardening horizons

By LEE REICH
Associated Press

"Plant seeds" may seem like an inane suggestion for a gardening column. But I'm serious. More and more people who garden these days put plants rather than seeds into the ground.

In the old days, the arrival of warm weather would have us all dropping bean, beet, marigold and zinnia seeds into moist soil, then eagerly waiting for those first green sprouts. Go into any garden center these days, though, and you can buy "cell packs" of robust bean, beet, marigold and zinnia plants. And these are what many folks are planting.

Buying transplants does, of course, give you a jump on the season. You'll taste your first beans and smell your first marigolds sooner if you set out plants that were just started in a greenhouse. And many annuals — tomatoes, peppers, impatiens and pansies, to name a few — must have growth well underway in

spring if they are going to put on a reasonable performance in summer. But a lot of plants — including nasturtiums, bachelor buttons, corn and peas — don't really need that jump start.

THE REWARDS OF HAVING SOME FAITH

The main reason fewer people plant seeds these days is, I think, more serious: a lack of faith. People have trouble believing that dry, apparently lifeless specks the size of a comma or this letter "o" will grow into fat, juicy carrot roots or 6-foot-high hollyhock towers.

Once you have the faith and plant seeds, however, you reap practical benefits. Most obviously, seeds are cheap. For the same price as a single delphinium plant you could buy enough seeds to create a garden full of delphiniums. Most flowers look better planted in abundance anyway.

With some vegetables, it's just not practical to grow transplants. Beans, for instance: At the recommended

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