



A Beautiful Landscape Can Help Lower Energy Bills

Spring is knocking on your door, and you're ready to plant new flowers in the beds, trees in the yard and veggies in the garden. If you plan carefully, this springtime ritual can help make your home more energy efficient in both winter and summer.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, you can reduce your energy bills by \$100 to \$250 annually with smartly designed landscaping. A plan that considers how sunlight and wind affect the temperature in your home can help counter how those conditions affect your comfort and utility bills. Some helpful landscaping techniques include:

- Planting deciduous trees, ones that lose their leaves during the winter, in front of windows that receive significant amounts of sunlight. This helps block solar heat in the summer and lets it in during the winter when you need it most. A six-foot to eight-foot deciduous tree will begin shading your windows the first year and your roof, depending on the species, within five-10 years. If you live in a region where you have year-round sun and no significant winter, planting evergreen trees or shrubs limits sunlight entering your home and provides an adequate windbreak.
- Shading driveways and walkways cools the air before it reaches your home's walls and windows. Cooling other public areas such as patios will also help. Hedges, trellises or large bushes and shrubs offer appealing sights and significant amounts of shade to help cool these areas.
- Winter sunlight is a welcome heat source, but the wind that can accompany it can reduce its positive effects. A natural windbreak will reduce or redirect wind speed. Evergreen trees and shrubs planted on the side of your house that receives winds will help reduce the wind effect. Teaming evergreen trees and an earth berm, a natural or man-made wall, will direct wind over your house. Additionally, in snowy climates windbreaks will help keep snow away from your home's foundation.
- Implementing some techniques of Xeriscape, largely using natural precipitation to meet your landscapes watering needs, will reduce your water usage. Keep like together; plant flowers and vegetation with similar water needs in the same beds or close to each other.

Use plants that are drought tolerant even if you receive adequate rainfall; they don't require a lot of water and will provide variety to your landscape.

Now that you've got ideas on making your home more energy efficient using landscaping, go to your local nursery prepared. Create a map of your property that marks existing trees, your home, driveway, sidewalk and patio as well as:

- Wind direction and sun angles for both the winter and summer;
- Views you want to preserve;
- Areas where plant height and width could be restricted due to utility lines or public sidewalks;
- Areas where there is poor drainage or standing water; and
- Sick or dead trees that need to be removed

Your local nursery can help you choose appropriate trees and shrubs for your climate. Use a variety of sizes and shapes because some trees will be great for impeding summer winds; but not as effective against typically harsher winter winds. Growth rate is important as well. If you need sun protection quickly then you'll want fast-growing trees, however, remember rapid-growers generally don't live as long as their slow-growing brethren.



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