ZAP THE GRASS...AND MORE

Preparing Your Landscape for a Native Garden

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A presentation at Bringing Nature Home, Transitioning to a Beautiful, Water-Wise, Native Garden

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Assess the Site

- Existing trees and shrubs
  - Roots and branches
  - Health of existing plants
  - Compatibility of new landscape
Assess the Site

- Soil Type
  - Soil type
    - Sand, Silt, Clay
    - Hard Pan

- Soil Testing
  - Self
  - Professional
    - Will include nutrients and organic matter levels.
Assess the Site

- Structures or hardscape
  - Impact on the landscape
  - Permeability
  - New additions
  - Utilities
Assess the Site

- Slope and Drainage
  - Slow the Flow!
    - Rain Gardens
    - Mini-swales
    - Flow toward structures can be corrected
Assess the Site

- Reuse or Recycle materials on site
  - Rock, mulch, concrete
Design the New Garden

- Self
  - Low cost
  - Often “hodge-podge” collection
- Professional
  - Higher cost
  - Knowledgable of plants and techniques
  - Big picture
Demolition

- **Killing the Lawn**
  - Physical...dig it out. Hint: Use a sod cutter
  - Sheet mulch
  - Solarize
  - Chemical
Demolition

- Removing all that dead stuff
  - Sod cut the lawn to remove stolons and roots, especially if you have noxious weeds (Bermuda!)
    - Remove from site
  - Physically remove unwanted trees, shrubs and ground covers
    - Grind or chip wood/leaves for future mulch
  - Grind out roots of trees removed
    - Use clean chip for mulch...not compost in soil. Remove dirt/chip mix.
    - Remove large roots unless you want subsurface habitat. Otherwise they will eventually cause voids.
To Amend or Not to Amend?

- **Impacted Soils**
  - Years of synthetic chemical and fertilizer use
  - Highly compacted from construction or traffic
  - Apply organic compost by lightly incorporating with a rototiller
    - Combine with grading changes
    - Do not use ground bark or nitrified bark products

- **Native or well managed soils**
  - Consider not amending unless you want to grow plants that need more organic matter
  - Be gentle with grading changes

- **Plantings that require more organic material**
  - Usually these are plants that need more water and good drainage
Avoid Compaction

- Use the smallest equipment possible to achieve your goals
- Avoid working when the soil is wet.
Resources

- River Friendly Landscaping
  www.riverfriendly.org
- www.ecolandscape.org
- Slow the Flow movie:
  http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/stormfilm/