



# NEPENTHE ASSOCIATION

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## Design Guidance from Consulting Landscape Architect, Garth Ruffner, April 2022

### Plant choices:

- Generally, use low water-use plants
- Avoid ivy as it is high water use. Current ivy plantings may be difficult to remove. Where ivy is established, it is okay to add in higher water use plants on same valve.
- Develop a palette of low water use shrubs and ground covers to use successfully for mass plantings.
- Garth is preparing a new list of recommended low water-use plants for use throughout the community

### Planting practices:

- Front door areas of the homes offer place to plant an eye-catching variety of plants in differing heights and colors.
- Other opportunities for special, showy plantings are monument islands, amenities, and other gathering spaces.
- Most areas should be simple, mass plantings of a single species. The goal is to create a green palette (similar to the legacy ivy plantings) with showy locations at front doors.
- Plantings should enhance the nearby architecture- windows have low, spreading shrubs, long sections of blank walls and fences need taller plantings.
- Avoid large, heavy hedges along walkways and driveways as they obstruct passage and can be hiding places.
- Use of bark is okay when area is first planted. Plants, at maturity, need to provide ample coverage to avoid the view of bare dirt. The number of new plants needs to be adequate to ensure coverage.
- Summer months are not recommended for undertaking new planting.
- Tree removal sites are not a good choice for new trees- soil is generally nitrogen deprived and tree roots will prohibit the establishment of the new trees.
- Plantings are more interesting when the arrangement is staggered rather than lined up in rows. Instead of alternating types of plants they should be similar and grouped with taller shrubs and dwarf trees where there are blank walls. The plants need to be planted far enough out to allow for growth.
- Recommend looking at “Green Screens” for screening unattractive equipment like water meters and air conditioning units

### Irrigation:

- Shrub and turf should be on separate valves to allow for specific irrigation needs.



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- Point source emitters are discouraged.

## **Turf:**

- Recommends that the leadership team decide where turf enhances the property values and/or the lifestyle of the members and retain those areas.
- Target removing small strips of turf first for conversion to shrub beds.
- At 108 Elmhurst, consider converting turf to rain garden. (More guidance needed about rain gardens.)

## **Maintenance practices:**

- Areas under redwood and pine trees should be allowed to accumulate a small buildup of duff to act as a natural mulch to keep down weeds and encourage water retention.
- Heavy shrubbery in alleys is discouraged.
- Shrubs should be encouraged to “touch” and not be pruned into individual plants with air space around them.
- Where there are hedges, explore thinning out the number of plants and then carefully and selectively pruning the remaining plants into small trees that can then be allowed to obtain a natural canopy. Ground covering, and dwarf shrubs would be added so that it is not just dirt below. This allows for a nice variety of plants and takes advantage of the hardy, drought tolerant qualities of the older shrubs.
- The timing of pruning is critical both for growth and to prevent insect infestations and disease.
- Don't prune in summer except to keep walks clear and remove atypical branches (vertical shoots and such). Summer and early Fall pruning causes needless stress on plants that encourages poor quality regrowth.
- Most plants between December and early April before new growth begins. Light pruning may also be done year-round to correct situations that cannot wait until winter.

## **Follow up:**

- Garth to review and comment on these notes.
- Garth to attend an upcoming Grounds Committee meeting.
- Garth to revise plant palette.
- Garth to provide feedback on Zone 7 planned renovation.
- Garth to review and comment on Zones 3 and 4 tree remediations.