

Treeways

2022 - 5

Re-imagine Your Personal Ecospace

All my ash trees are dead or dying from emerald ash borer infestations. My blue spruces with their lower dead branches look like "State Fair Trees" (Christmas trees on a stick). Oak Wilt. Dutch Elm Disease. All the invasive buckthorn, honeysuckle, amur maple, burdock were removed and **now all I have is open empty space.**

What's next? Nature abhors a vacuum and in Minnesota plants grow and cover bare ground everywhere and quickly. If you have open (i.e., empty) bare soil, in only a short time it will be filled with green growing plants (read weeds and invasives). On your estate I guarantee that if you do not bring in the trees/shrubs/grasses/wildflowers you imagine and desire, Mother Nature will cover the ground with green for you. And surprise, surprise it will not be what you want, and they will most likely be undesirable invasive plant species. Instead, re-imagine your new ecospace that was made possible by problems with insects, diseases and invasive species.

You can dramatically influence how your changing landscape and your future ecospace develop by dreaming, research and planning. Before you schedule a landscaper to install or before you order your future trees/shrubs/grasses/wildflowers to plant your dream landscape take a deep breath. Go get a lawn chair and sit out in your current landscape. Look around, feel the space, and imagine doing your family's activities there. How will you move through the space? How will you use the space? Soccer, climbing trees, lawn mowing, frisbee, tree fort, raising goats, playing with the dog, walking trails, fruit orchard, vegetable garden, putting green, zip line, swimming pool, horseshoes, flying your drone ... endless possibilities.

Focus on the vision and explore ideas that give you joy and then share and discuss the possibilities with your significant others. In your imagination how many trees will there be and where do they get planted? Where do the fruit trees, blueberry bushes, raspberry bushes and strawberries go? Where will the putting green or disc golf baskets be placed? Are there pathways and where do they lead? Dog run? A sketch is a way to help crystallize your vision. Sketch out your ideas and sit back down again in your lawn chair with the sketch and imagine your landscape ideas and improvements. The sketch will be very helpful even if it is not pretty. Imagine moving through the landscape, then walk through the space, and invite your spouse, kids, parents, or good friends to walk through the future ecospace with you. Now you are ready to move to the installation/construction phase.

You may hire a contractor, or you may decide to order the trees/shrubs/grasses/wildflowers so you can begin DIY installing the new landscape. Initial changes may happen very quickly and as time goes on you will nurture, edit and enjoy your living landscape and ecospace while they grow and develop. Some growing things grow and flourish in one year while others take 2-3 years to settle in. Some perennial meadow flowers only come into full flower after 4-5 years of growth and some very special plants may take 10 or more years to reach their imagined potential. Many shade trees come into their prime at 20+ years so **the most important part is getting started.**

Living ecospace takes time and care to achieve the vision. The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago and the second-best time is today. You can live your landscape dreams.

Your City Forester is available for consultation regarding tree and ecological questions at no charge. He may be reached at 612-803-9033 or Jim@LStrees.com.