

Spring Forward with HMWhite

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With only the occasional hints of spring arriving, most designed landscapes are showcasing one of their most visually challenged seasonal periods. How does one maintain or address these horticultural realities and challenges?

Late coverings of blankets of snow certainly have not helped the conventional difficult seasonal transition as these unexpected weather events have crushed and freeze dried some of the earliest spring plant performers used to offset a landscape's "winter blues."



How does one maintain or address these horticultural realities and challenges? First, it requires knowledge of each plant's seasonal behavior and extent of resiliency in coping with random weather blunders within conventional seasonal cycles. HMWhite planting designs acknowledge the need to balance an evergreen skeletal structure with seasonal vibrancy of floral herbaceous material. Understanding the floral and foliage sequencing of each plant and its compatible and complimentary intermixing with its neighbors is fundamental to each planting composition.



Many of HMWhite's landscape and planting designs include distinct plant community matrixes. The seasonal interaction of shrubs, grasses, ground covers, bulbs and flowering perennials work together in sequenced harmony. Particularly with recently installed landscapes, we have convinced many of our clients that a landscape management program is essential to ensure the design's maturation and to fulfill planting design intentions. One cannot expect that an independent landscape maintenance contractor to understand the essence or the nuances of a diverse mixture of plant species. As author to these planting designs, HMWhite is its prime advocate and resource to direct the distinct plant care needed to nurture a young landscape to a minimal level of maintenance requirements. To this end, we prepare custom landscape management manuals, which identify each plant used, their expected seasonal attributes, performative qualities, short and long term expectations with their inter-relationship within their defined plant community. The manual instructs maintenance contractors on seasonal landscape management protocols required to support the design's maturing process. The manual provides the owner with assurances that their landscape investment will be upheld and not mismanaged through uninformed and random maintenance practices. With the level of specificity outlined within the manual, owners are able to use the manual as a bidding tool, which insures credible cost comparisons from bidders proposing their annual contracts.

One of the manual's other objective is to establish toxic-free landscape management principles and recommended organic products that ensure healthy and highly productive soils, improved ground water quality, enhanced wildlife and insect habitat protection, and removal of human and pet health risks from alternative and widely used landscape products. The expectation that the landscape architect's work is over upon a project's installation completion is misguided. While we appreciate owner's common project fatigue syndrome by construction completion, the success of a designed landscape rest heavily within the nature and scope of its follow-up care and landscape management. Just as it is unrealistic for a patient to know what to do to heal properly following surgery, newly installed landscapes need a script to matriculate from post construction stress and transition into a sustainable and high performing landscape.



HMWhite does not abandon its projects following its substantial completion. We return to project sites and observe how the plants and the overall landscape infrastructures are performing. We are committed to seeing our landscapes meet their full design potential and mature to a stable and robust state that will last and thrive for generations.