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# Resolve to put the right plant in the right place

Pamela Corle-Bennett, Contributing Writer, Dayton Daily News, Saturday, Jan. 7, 2017

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These blue spruces will soon outgrow this house.

I have a suggested New Year's resolution for gardeners, landscapers, and anyone else who plants trees, shrubs and any other plants: I resolve to plant the right plant in the right place!

So many plant problems can be avoided by following this resolution.

While shopping before the holidays, I went to a store in a new commercial development. The parking lot, trees, shrubs — all were new.

The problem was that the landscape design called for Japanese maples to be planted in two of the parking-lot tree islands.

Japanese maples are not and I repeat, *not* parking-lot trees — nor are they tough enough to serve as a street tree.

Japanese maples do best in a slightly protected landscape setting with moist, well-drained soil.

If you have ever had the chance to see one of these tree islands being prepared during construction, you know that the soil and planting area alone aren't that great. In addition, the area is surrounded by blacktop that gets pretty hot during the summer.

The bottom line is that Japanese maples will not thrive in this location and will likely struggle and look pretty awful by mid-summer. I'll keep you posted.

In real estate, it's all about location and the same thing applies to plants. Put a plant in a perfect site and you'll get great performance in the long run.

Another plant that is typically misused in the Miami Valley is the rhododendron. These are really hard to pass up in the spring when they are in full bloom. The flowers are spectacular.

However, enjoy it while it's blooming the first year, because it doesn't quite look the same in our landscapes once planted.

Rhododendrons prefer an acidic soil or a soil pH of around 5.5. Our soil pH is typically 7.4 or around there. This is not optimal for these plants to grow.

Gardeners may try to change the soil pH by adding soil sulfur, but it won't last because of the parent soil material we have around here — limestone. Our soil pH is extremely difficult to change.

You might be able to success with rhododendrons in raised beds or in a container where you have more control over the pH, but this requires a lot more work.

When you purchase a plant or when you are planning your landscape, read about a plant to learn where it will grow best and then try to find that location in your landscape.

Or, if you have a particular problem in your landscape — a wet area, for instance — look for plants that tolerate wet or damp soils.

And remember that plants grow if they are happy. Be sure to learn the mature size of the plant and place it in your landscape where you won't have to prune to keep it small or in specific area.

It's a lot easier for everyone when a plant is happy in its home. Remember, right plant right place!

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