

Stop Landscaping, Start Life-Scaping: A Guide to Ending the Rush-Rush, Humdrum Approach to Landscape Development and Care

Monique Allen

Ingram Spark (Mar 17, 2020)

Softcover \$24.95 (250pp)

978-0-578-61941-5

Stop Landscaping, Start Life-Scaping is an inviting work for gardeners hoping to discover their true selves.

Monique Allen's comprehensive *Stop Landscaping, Start Life-Scaping* encourages a systemic approach to landscape development and care that fosters partnership with the land and its ecosystems, rather than relationships with big-box stores.

Allen, who boasts over thirty years of experience in the landscaping field, developed the concept of "Life-Scaping" to help all gardeners, from weekend do-it-yourselfers to professionals, integrate their gardening into their lives. The ultimate goal is that both gardens and gardeners be transformed: "A landscape is what you look at. A Life-Scape is what you live in. A Life-Scape resonates."

Practical as it moves from dream to design to finished product, the book lauds the transformational effects of gardening. It espouses a system-based approach that, while complex, addresses the needs of both the gardener and the garden, regarding gardening as a partnership with nature. It suggests that people prioritize creating a healthy ecosystem rather than resorting to cosmetic improvements, symptom control, and short-lived, often harmful quick fixes.

This detailed guide outlines what a true partnership between a gardener, the land, and plants looks like, and takes the needs of each partner into consideration. Its tone is friendly and its complex notions are made credible and easy to understand, backed by research and experience in the field. Its is a long-range view of gardening: over the next twenty years, it says, the needs of both a garden and its owner will change.

Detailed ideas for creating an initial plan that will allow future changes are shared; allowances are made for mistakes, but it is clear that the book expects mistakes to be fewer and less harmful because of its suggestions. Still, the book states its case, and its suggestions for resolving issues, on repeat.

Within the text, light-blue boxes highlight important information and provide tips and resources for gardening success. A lovely leaf illustration recurs, its inclusion a touch of grace; each chapter begins with an inspiring quotation and ends with a list of tasks to be done, broken up into smaller bits so as not to be overwhelming. A bibliography and list of resources facilitate further research.

Like waiting for plants to grow, changing a gardener's mindset can take time, Allen knows, especially when they are bombarded with the industry's product-based solutions. The text is both gentle and firm as it addresses how the mindset of a gardener can sabotage their success. Some of its revelations may provoke resistance even in experienced gardeners, tackling the human desire for quick results and the reluctance to outsource tasks beyond a do-it-yourselfer's abilities.

Stop Landscaping, Start Life-Scaping is an inviting work for gardeners hoping to discover their true selves while building beautiful, life-enhancing, ecologically sound outdoor environments to share with their family, friends, and larger communities.

KRISTINE MORRIS (January 23, 2020)

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