



*MONTE VISTA*  
*HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION*

**LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES**

**PREPARED BY:  
THE UTSA COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE**

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# INTRODUCTION

Landscape decisions can impact the **look** of a house in many ways. Careful choices and appropriate plant installations can **enhance** the look of the house, **highlight** its **attributes** and **minimize** blemishes or imperfections.

Historic documentation of **specific** plant types is incomplete, but certain plants were known to have been used in landscaping the homes in Monte Vista.

One of the ways that landscape was used **historically** in Monte Vista was to enhance the **appearance** of the house from the street. Plants were used to define edges, provide a color compliment, or to add a note of formality or informality in accordance with the style of the house.

Landscape features, especially **vegetation**, change over time. The homeowner interested in maintaining a historic landscape in Monte Vista should consider how these changes affect the overall character of the landscape.

# STREET PRESENTATION

Houses of great style and beauty as are found in the Monte Vista neighborhood should remain **visible** to the street. There is no **historic evidence** to support the screening of homes from the street. During a tour of the Monte Vista neighborhood it was observed that there are many plantings of crepe myrtle along the median between the street and sidewalk. Even at a height of four to six feet these shrubs **obstruct** the view of the house. It is **recommended** that large shrubs such as crepe myrtle be planted **perpendicular** to the street rather than along the median. In this manner each house can be visually separate, the decorative element of the shrubs is maintained, and the **view** of the house from the street is preserved.

It is further recommended that great care be taken in the introduction of plants to the sidewalk median. Herbs and flowers of **sprawling** habit should be **avoided**.

Historically the front yard in Monte Vista was an expanse of **lawn**. In the early history of the neighborhood yards were fenced to keep out livestock. Later as livestock was contained in the back yard there was a campaign to remove fences from the front yard. For a time a house could not win the best landscape award if the front yard was hidden behind a fence. With the exception of fences that are now historic in their own right, it is recommended that the back yard be fenced if desired, while the front yard should **remain unfenced** if no fence presently exists.

# LANDSCAPE CATEGORIES

## **Native plants**

It is a good policy to use native plants where possible in the landscape. Native plants are adapted to the climatic conditions of Texas. They generally have low water and fertilization requirements.

## **Formal landscapes**

Formal landscapes are comprised primarily of topiaries and manicured evergreen hedges. They are laid out in geometric patterns.

## **Edible yards**

Historic yards in Monte Vista were not only beautiful, with wide expanses of yard, large shade trees, and flower beds, but often were sprinkled with edible plants and fruit. Peach trees, herb beds, vegetable gardens and flowers were part of the historic landscape in the Monte Vista. Possible plant types for edible landscapes include fruit and nut trees, roses and various flowers, herbs, and vegetables. Roses can be grown to enhance the landscape and also for the hips they produce, which can be used for tea, if grown without insecticides. See Texas A&M or the Antique Rose Emporium websites for recommended varieties. Herbs and edible flowers such as viola, pansy, and nasturtium can be planted successfully in the landscape, as well as ornamental or edible pepper shrubs such as Texas Chile pequín, or upright South American pepper varieties.

## **Historic and Heritage Landscapes**

Immigrants often brought their favorite plants or seeds from their homeland.

Maintaining a true historic landscape can be as meticulous as preserving a historic home. Landscapes, especially vegetation, change greatly over time, and the character of the original setting can be lost. While some plant types used historically in Monte Vista are documented, the records are incomplete.

Guidelines from the National Parks Service can provide a template for the development of historic landscapes.

Once a plan has been implemented, guidelines for the maintenance of the landscape should be followed.

# VICTORIAN

Mature trees

Ornamental and understory trees

Flowering shrubs

Perennial flowers and bulbs

Perennial herbs such as rosemary, mint, sage

Borders and beds with perennial flowers

Low shrubs along walkways

Stone or brick retaining walls

Walkways of crushed granite, pecan shells, or brick



# COLONIAL REVIVAL

Formal Presentation

Deciduous trees

Evergreen trees

Ornamental trees

Formal hedge

Promenade walkway with low hedge border

Accent flowers only



# NEOCLASSICAL

Formal presentation

Deciduous trees

Evergreen trees

Ornamental trees

Formal hedge

Promenade walkway with low hedge border

Perennial flowerbeds

Formal walkway





# TUDOR

Mature trees

Understory trees

Ornamental trees

Large manicured hedges such as viburnum, privet, or yew

Ivy along vertical walls or side of house, especially brick facades

Rose arbor or trellis

Few flowers, perhaps some bulbs or small accent bed of old fashioned flowers

Herb garden, laid out in formal pattern

Stone or brick retaining walls

Herringbone patterned paths

Fountains



# ITALIAN RENAISSANCE REVIVAL

Formal presentation

Cypress and citrus trees

Laurel, plum, juniper

Windmill palm

Perennial flower beds

Low hedge

Herb beds

Roses

Pergola



# SPANISH *I*NSPIRED

Citrus Trees

Palm trees

Fruit trees such as olive, pomegranate, fig, apple, pear and peach

Grapevine

Windmill palm

Perennial flower beds

Native plants

Low hedge



# PRAIRIE & CRAFTSMAN

Informal, asymmetrical, natural layouts

Low maintenance, drought and disease-resistant plants

Native plants preferred

Less turf

Bunch grasses such as bushy bluestem, purple threeawn

Ornamental or flowering trees

Perennial flowers for accent beds

Wisteria, clematis, climbing roses, ivy, morning glories, sweet peas, ivy, bougainvillea

Birdbath

Pergola or trellis



# LAWNS

One of the primary issues that should be considered when making landscape decisions is water consumption. San Antonio is part of an area of uneven rainfall patterns and long hot summers. While lush lawns have been an historic part of the Monte Vista landscape, particular care should be taken in decisions regarding both the amount of lawn to install and the variety of grass selected.

Grass has two growth habits, clumping, or bunching, which do not spread, and rhizome, which spread underground. The bunch varieties are used for accent in the yard, while the spreading varieties are used for expanses of lawn.

Historically homes in Monte Vista had lawns covering much of the front yard. There are many native grasses that should be considered as a draught tolerant alternative to regular turf grass such as St. Augustine. Using a native grass such as buffalo grass can be a very attractive alternative for these broader expanses of lawn. Besides avoiding some of the disease problems of St. Augustine such as brown patch, native grasses have very low fertilization requirements. As fertilizer runoff is so very detrimental to the San Antonio River and the plant and aquatic species that inhabit it, selecting grasses with lower fertilization needs is a better choice whenever possible.

Consult the landscape resources at the end of this section for more information or your local lawn specialist.

# PAVING

Historically - minimal amount of paving in neighborhood

In the Monte Vista neighborhood there was historically a minimum amount of paving. The neighborhood is friendly to pedestrians with ample sidewalk space on east- west streets.

The house is prominently displayed; the driveway delivers the car to the detached garage at the rear. Two track driveways were common and ran along the side of the house.

Materials for driveways should be pervious where possible. Turf pavers are interlocking concrete pavers that are laid and filled with soil. They allow support for heavy vehicles while keeping the historic look and feel of the neighborhood. Turf pavers can be planted with grass or filled with gravel or other pervious material.

Walkways can also be made of pervious materials such as crushed brick, pea gravel, crushed oyster or pecan shells.



# GRASSES



Zoysia



Buffalo



Winter Rye



Winter Wheat



Bushy Bluestem



Purple Threeawn



Purple Muhly



Blue Grama

# SHRUBS



Viburnum Suspensum



Yew Shrub



Privet Shrub



Boxwood Shrub



Yaupon Shrub



Clethra Alnifolia



Summersweet



Barberry



# PERENNIALS



Rose- Scented Geranium



Rose Bush



Ox-eye daisy



Spider Lily



Chile Pequin



Blue Plumbago



Purple Coneflower



Mexican Oregano

# TREES



Crape Myrtle



Texas Mock Orange



Texas Mountain Laurel



Texas Maple

# LANDSCAPE RESOURCES

## Common Turf Grasses

<u>Grass Species</u>	<u>Shade Tolerance</u>	<u>Water Requirement</u>	<u>Traffic Tolerance</u>
St. Augustine	High	Medium	Low
Bermuda	Very low	Med.-Low	High
Buffalo	Medium	Very Low	Medium
Centipede	Medium	Medium	Low
Tall Fescue	High	Medium	Medium
Zoysia japonica*	Med.-High	Medium	High
Zoysia matrella*	Med.-High	Medium	Medium

<u>Grass Species</u>	<u>Cold Tolerance</u>	<u>Salinity Tolerance</u>	<u>Disease Potential</u>
St. Augustine	Low	Medium	High
Bermuda	Medium	Med.-High	Med.-Low
Buffalo	High	Low	Low
Centipede	Low-Med.	Low	Med.-Low
Tall Fescue	High	Low	Low
Zoysia japonica*	High	Med.-High	Med.-Low
Zoysia matrella*	Medium	Medium	Med.-Low

<u>Grass Species</u>	<u>Mowing Freq.</u>	<u>Mowing Height</u>	<u>Fertility Req.</u>	<u>Leaf Texture</u>
St. Augustine	5-7 days	2.5-3.5"	Medium	Coarse
Bermuda	3-7 days	1.0-1.5"	High	Fine
Buffalo	7-14 days	2.5-3.0"	Low	Fine
Centipede	7-14 days	1.5-2.5"	Low	Coarse
Tall Fescue	5-7 days	2.5-3.0"	Medium	Coarse
Zoysia japonica*	7-10 days	1.0-1.5"	Med.-Low	Medium
Zoysia matrella*	5-7 days	0.5-1.0"	Medium	Fine

# LANDSCAPE RESOURCES

## Web Links

[www.growit.com](http://www.growit.com) Texas landscape plants

<http://www.antiqueroseemporium.com/> Antique Rose Emporium

[www.aggie.tamu.edu](http://www.aggie.tamu.edu) Texas A&M turf grass information

<http://heritagelandscapes.com/systems/rochester.htm> heritage landscapes

## Six Components of a Preservation Maintenance Plan:

- Define objectives of how a preservation maintenance plan will support an existing maintenance program
- Delineate areas and categories of features to help describe the composition of the landscape
- Inventory landscape features including their names, origins, ages, and sizes
- Conduct a field inspection and summarize work needed for different types of landscape features and associated tasks
- Keep records relating to the maintenance of each feature type
- Develop a seasonal calendar listing when preservation maintenance tasks should be implemented throughout the year

For homeowners interested in developing a heritage landscape, it is recommended that the guidelines from the NPS be consulted. A more complete reference is the *Guide to Developing a Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape*, written for the NPS by Margaret Coffin and Regina M. Bellavia.