

Metamorphosis

by Amy Bledsoe

How many of you owned an Etch-A-Sketch as a child or bought one for your children? They were great, weren't they? You could draw stairs that went up, and stairs that went down. Mastering circles was a bit harder, though, wasn't it? The really cool thing about the Etch-A-Sketch was that if you weren't happy with your drawing you simply turned it over and gave it a good shake. Instantly, you had a blank canvas on which draw a new picture. Wouldn't it be great to make changes to other things in our lives? Like a chance to start over with a messy house or even a yard that has gotten away from you by simply shaking it away?

One thing that gardeners know is that the yard and garden they started with is not the same one that you likely have today. How many of you have lived in the same house for more than ten years? (Call on someone) How long have you live in your house? Is there anyone here who lives in the same house that you had when you first began to have children? When your children were small, your yard required that you have a play area for the children. As the children grew up, your needs changed for your yard. Maybe you added a storage shed. Perhaps you need a place to park a boat or camper. When your children became old enough to drive, perhaps you expanded the driveway or let them park on the grass because there was no other place for them to park. Maybe you planted a tree in honor of the birth of your child. Today that tree is a mature specimen that grew larger than you expected it to. One thing almost everyone can relate to is to have planted something in the wrong place. A tree that is too close to the house, a shrub that is unhappy with the light conditions that have changed over the years as trees grew large, or you've planted a tree where the power company comes along on a regular basis to butcher it.

All gardens or yards go through a process of metamorphosis, as do our needs from our yards. None of us is getting any younger. Perhaps you anticipated retiring from working and fantasized about getting to spend time in your yard at your leisure. In your fantasy, this is a pleasurable task in which a spouse is lending a willing hand. However, is this always the reality? Sometimes time is a precious commodity that cannot be allocated to leisurely gardening as you once hoped. Your own health does not allow you to do all that you once could when you were younger, or you care for someone else in poor health. Time can be precious for good reasons, too, like caring for grandchildren or finally getting to travel as you once dreamed of doing now that you have time. Just as we age, so, too, do our gardens and yards. Trees and shrubs, just like people, have a life span. Boxwoods that have become thin and leggy are just not that attractive and never will be again. Now may be a good time to reassess your yard.

You've invested a lot of time and money in your yard. Does changing lifestyles mean you have to completely start over? This sounds expensive! Happily, the answer is usually a resounding NO! How, then, do you decide what to keep in your yard and what to get rid of? Some of these decisions are easily made and obvious. You know that the English Ivy has taken over. You know that some plants are no longer happy with their growing conditions. You know those tired-looking butchered trees along the power lines need to go.

How do you know if some plants simply need a good pruning or should be removed? What if you really would like a yard makeover, but feel like there might be some plants worth keeping? Which ones? How can you still have a great looking yard that meets your needs for your current lifestyle and be at a maintenance level that you can handle? This is where the services of Jungle Tamers and a landscape designer can be of assistance. A consultation by a landscape designer can help assess your yard with a trained eye and a fresh perspective. You may not even need an actual design done, but a designer can tell you which existing plant materials are worth keeping and which ones should be discarded. A few small changes can make a large impact. In many cases subtraction of some plants may be all that is needed along with an updated irrigation system. In other cases, a few new plants in just the right places proved to be just the right thing for a fresh, updated look with plants that require less maintenance. A yard in which the light conditions have become too shaded may be simply in need of an arborist to come and allow a little more light to come through the canopy and take care of some dead limbs. A new brick paved path in a garden that is wider than your present path may make the garden more accessible to you as you age and keep you from falling or accommodate a wheel chair. The addition of raised beds could keep you gardening for many more years without having to bend down. Jungle Tamers can assist you by removing plant material as needed and reclaiming overgrown parts of the yard that have simply gotten away from you. Once the yard is transformed into something that you can handle, it will be easy for you to maintain it or have a landscaping company maintain it for you. All you will have to do is as much as you would like. Gardening once again can become the leisurely pastime you once dreamed it could be.