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WSU Ferry County Extension  
350 E. Delaware Ave. #9  
Republic, WA 99166  
509-775-5225, X1116  
[jordant@wsu.edu](mailto:jordant@wsu.edu)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

How Low Can You Go (Maintenance Wise)

R/L Wilkie, WSU Ferry County Extension Master Gardener

I hope this advice helps you. I know I need it. Beware the vows of March: “This will be the best garden yet!” that lead to the regrets of August: “This is the most demanding garden ever!”

Reassess Your Dreams.

The glorious photos! The articles! Plant this plant! Renovate your lawn! Add a water feature! “Easy to build!” “Do it in a weekend!” Yeah, right. Before starting that new project, ask yourself:

Will these plants thrive in my conditions?

Do I have the time? The space? The water?

Is help available if needed?

Can I afford this?

Is this sustainable?

What’s the long term gain?

Is this worth the effort?

Not doable? Don’t do it. Look at what works for others in your situation. Scale back your goals based on your answers. Then, limit yourself to one major project at a time.

Don’t Plan to Do It All Yourself.

Save your effort for what you most love.

Beg buy or trade for plant starts.

Hire an expert to prune.

Hire help weeding and mowing

Trade produce for help with chores.

Plan for Success. (not perfection)

Have a space prepared before spending money on plants.

Have a simpler plan in mind if your first idea doesn’t work out.

Allow twice as long for a task as you think it should take.

Landscape for long term ease.

Set vegetable garden paths on an easy to navigate grid.

Keep paths wide enough for walking around a parked cart, and mulch heavily.

Plant crops you can harvest without bending down, like pole beans and cucumbers on trellises.

Place seating in shady nearby spots, and take breaks.

Keep your lawn small and simply shaped for mowing ease.

Choose tough easy care plants; no namby-pambies.

Right plant, right place. Heed your plants requirements.

Prepare soil well before planting.

Shallow rooted crops can grow in window planters or even in a wall garden.

Place the highest need plants where you spend the most time.

Place edging between lawns and garden beds to reduce grass in beds.

Use high, medium and low water zones, placing highest need plantings closest to your water source.



### Spend Some Cash.

Well designed, quality, labor saving tools are worth every penny. Cheap knockoffs abound. Seek out the best.

Good fencing (6' high to keep out deer)

No-kink hoses

Hose reels

Drip irrigation with timers

Tarps

Tools designed for ease of use.

Self-watering containers

Streamline Intensive Tasks.

Suppress weeds with mulch or ground covers.

Raise food growing beds to a convenient height.

Use perennial cover crops of low growing legumes, grasses and forbs in orchards and hard to maintain areas. (Check the mix for invasive species before buying.)

Limit Size.

Forget the saying, "Dream Big!" Time to reduce.

Expand low maintenance leisure areas.

Let the outer edges go back to natives.

Enlarge the circle of non-invasive ground covers under your trees.

Sources:

Gardening for Life: A Guide to Garden Adaptations for Gardeners of all Ages and Abilities

WSU Master Gardeners of Spokane County, MISC0545.pdf

Choosing the Right Plants for a Trouble Free Garden

[snohomishcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7255](http://snohomishcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/7255)

Drought Advisory: Water Conservation in Gardens and Landscapes [cru.cahe.wsu.edu/EM4834pdf](http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/EM4834pdf)

Raised Beds: Deciding if They Fit Your Vegetable Garden

Craig Cogger, Extension Soil Specialist [cru.cahe.wsu.edu/FSO75E.pdf](http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/FSO75E.pdf)

Hardy Plants for Waterwise Landscapes

Virginia Lohr, Professor of Environmental Horticulture [public.wsu.edu](http://public.wsu.edu)

If you have any questions or would like additional information contact the WSU Ferry County Extension office <http://county.wsu.edu/ferry/Pages/default.aspx>, (509) 775-5225, X1116, [jordant@wsu.edu](mailto:jordant@wsu.edu) or stop by our office in the courthouse.

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