

episode twelve: The Big Picture

No live orchestra played an original music score, no tall red curtains spanning the width of the stage swung open, and no troupe in sparkling costumes knee-kicked its way on stage. No one ever told them they needed a big production to present “Episode 12: The Big Picture.” The Garden-Wise Guys just needed clips from past episodes to tie together everything they’ve been explaining about sustainable landscaping for the past four years. Wise Guys Owen Dell and Billy Goodnick, who also happen to be landscape architects, donned their donated tuxedos (courtesy of King Tux) and took center row, sitting at Santa Barbara’s Granada Theatre to summarize what they’ve been saying all along: The three elements to sustainable landscaping are design, construction and maintenance.



key concepts

In the design phase

1. Know the site, and/or be like Owen and make friends with the site by sitting. Sit in a chair, move the chair and sit again, taking in the areas of shade and sun, the windy spots, the flow of drainage.
2. Do a site analysis, which, for Owen and Billy meant dressing up in trench coats and vintage brim hats, like Dick Tracys, taking notes. What are the lot measurements, the building’s dimensions and the existing plants? Where are the good views, the problem areas of the garden? Get it on paper, and to scale.
3. Decide what to keep and, yes, what to toss. While Billy said it’s time to bite the bullet, Owen said bite the shrub. Which he did, snarling and shaking his head in a clip, his teeth clenched around uprooted shrubbery. Soil should play a part in the decision process, but no, Owen didn’t gnaw on a sample.
4. Which brings us to the next consideration in the design phase. Know your soil. Clay? Sandy? Loam, which is the ideal? Most of us have clay. You don’t need a taste test. Use your fingers.
5. This step is the key concept in sustainability: Right plant, right place. This was the topic of their first Garden-Wise Guys episode, when our first impression of Owen was a gardener who held up two fingers as a visual aid to:
 1. Concept 1, which focused on picking the right size and spacing of plants.
 2. Concept 2 (Owen holding up three fingers),



- regarding plants that prefer sun or shade
3. Concept 3 (one finger), soil type
 4. And concept 4 (two fingers), knowing water requirements, such as infrequent deep irrigation for shrubs and frequent shallow irrigation for lawns.



Lawns. Say that to Owen and you might as well scratch the chalkboard. "I hate that word," he said, cringing.

6. Reduce or eliminate lawns. Sometimes, homeowners need only a postage stamp of a lawn, as Billy put it. Owen showed an alternative called a sedge lawn, which can be mowed. Or not. Either way, it uses half as much water and fertilizer as a conventional lawn.
7. Consider irrigation options. Rotating sprinkler heads? Drip irrigation?
8. Use an irrigation controller.
9. Research plants:

- a) What is the function of the plant for the area? Food? To attract birds, or beneficial insects?
- b) Categorize plants according to their heights – low, medium or high.
- c) What do your plants need? Soil type, watering, sun or shade.
- d) Look at plants for their colors and shapes.

Gotta go. The Wise Guys got kicked out of their seats.