Assess the site for sun, wind, drainage, and soil- You should start with a thorough understanding of each of these elements for your site specifically for each area you are planting. Get a soil test before you start, observe sun patterns in heat of summer and shade of winter, check drainage for the area and improve if needed.

Microclimates/water/work zones- Creating a good landscape involves grouping plants together that have similar needs for sun, wind, water, and soil. Each part of your project area will be slightly different but by selecting plants for the conditions specifically in one area, you are likely to have success. In addition, by grouping plants with similar needs, you now have created watering zones that take the same amount of moisture in one area. Put high maintenance plants that require regular deadheading or lots of water nearest the house or water source, and put more drought tolerant and less fussy plants further from prime locations. No plant looks good 24/7, choose longer season plants for high traffic areas to get best performance.

Create a simple landscape plan for a small area or for a large project- This gives you a blueprint to follow, makes you keep notes of conditions on the site and helps you stay on track for how big plants might get or where they cast shade as they grow. Take this plan with you to the nursery and be sure to note utilities or septic systems.

Putting your plan into action- Improve drainage and the soil before you start, figure out how you will get water to all these plants, buy all your plants at one time or set out empty pots to remind you where you have additional plants to come later, plan for increased maintenance in newly planted areas.

How to plant and maintain plants correctly- Choose the right plant for the right place, empower yourself at the nursery, prepare the hole with adequate nutrition and mycorrhizae, water frequently to start

Maintenance is critical- Choose plants with low maintenance requirements but remember no plant is “no maintenance”. Water, weed, and fertilize because “thriving is even better than surviving”.

Landscaping and Ornamentals
A seminar with Liza Ehle
OSU Master Gardeners