

## *Garden Inspirations*

### **Know Your Landscaper: There's No Substitute for Experience**

**By Joe Covington**

Forty years ago, I would have told you I knew how to landscape your home, and I really believed it! I had energy and quite a bit of experience from installing landscapes with my dad since I was 7 or 8 years old.

Before I went in to business for myself, I was a landscape foreman for Beecher H. Metz, a registered Landscape Architect formerly with Lambert's Landscape Company of Dallas. I had the privilege of installing landscapes at some of the most fabulous homes in all of Dallas. At that time (early 70's), the formal landscapes were "the toast" of the day. By installing several professional jobs under Mr. Metz's direction, I began to feel the rhythm of high quality landscaping and I fell in love with it! Every job was fun!

My confidence level was high enough that I decided to start my own business in 1972. I wanted to share the joy of landscaping and was willing to do what people asked me to do with respect to plant selection and pricing. I'm here to tell you today that neither of those things adds up to a successful, sustainable landscape that customers could enjoy well into the future. Cutting corners cheats the customer. Being "the low bidder" was what they wanted - or so the customers and I thought - but using quality plants in the proper exposures, and preparing the beds correctly and with adequate bed size, should never be subject to any shortcuts if you really want to love your landscape for many years to come.

So, to summarize, here is what I know today. There is no substitute for experience! When choosing your landscaper, ask to see her or his finished work. Testimonials are also positive confirmation that other folks were pleased with the results. It would be important to know if any problems cropped up after the job was completed and the money paid, and how the landscaper responded when something needed replacing or adjusting!

Anybody can portray him or herself positively in an advertisement, but word-of-mouth is the genuine assessment from fellow gardeners or homeowners who want to share their landscaping joy...or misery!

***Neighborsgo gardening columnist Joe Covington is the owner of Covington's Nursery & Landscape Company on Liberty Grove in Rowlett.***