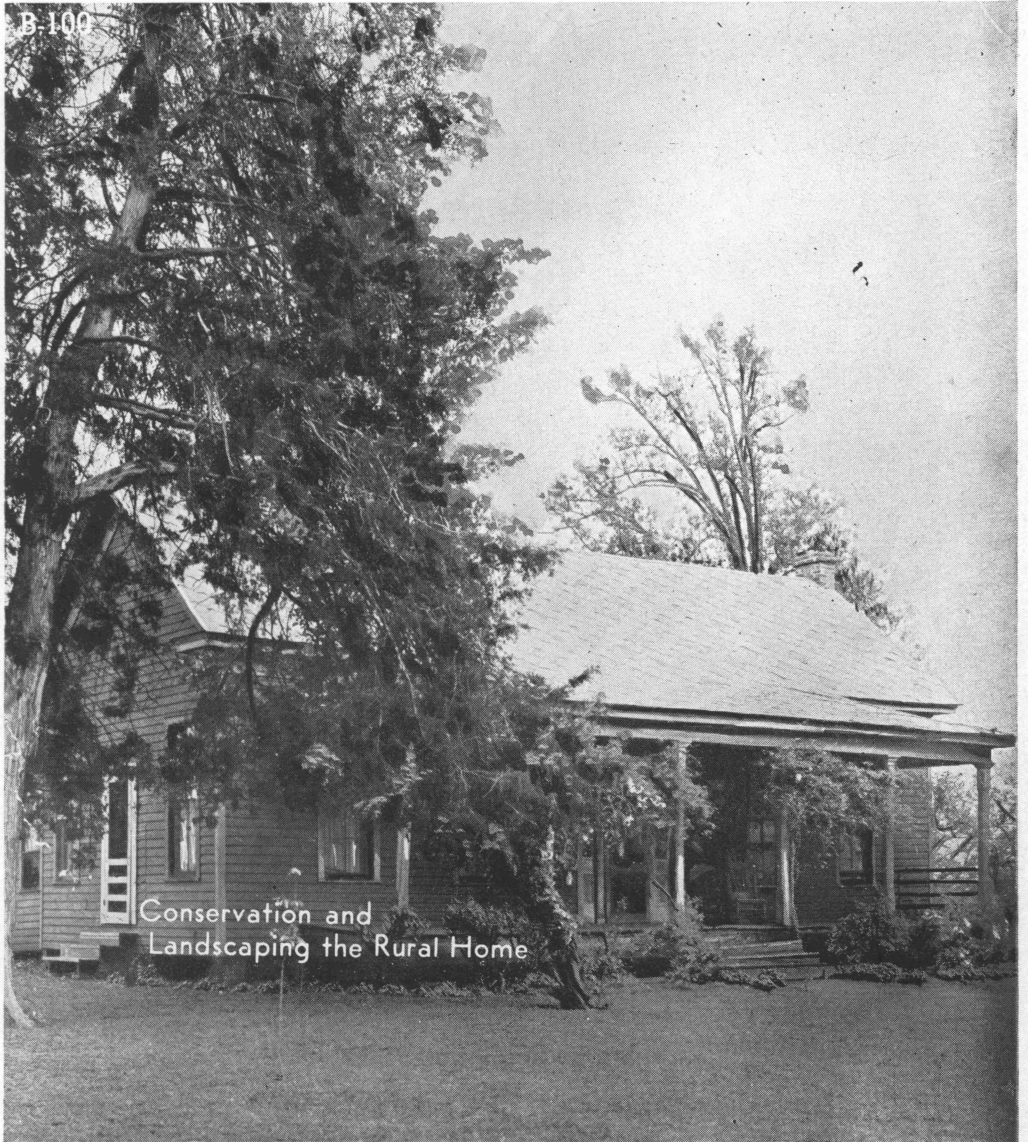


B-100



Conservation and  
Landscaping the Rural Home

issued by  
The Extension Service  
Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas and  
The United States Department of Agriculture  
H. H. Williamson, Director, College Station, Texas



# Conservation and Landscaping The Rural Home

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Landscaping a country home means arranging and treating every unit of the farm or ranch so as to provide a maximum of convenience, comfort, and beauty for the family working and living in that home. Unfortunately a narrower idea of landscaping sometimes prevails.

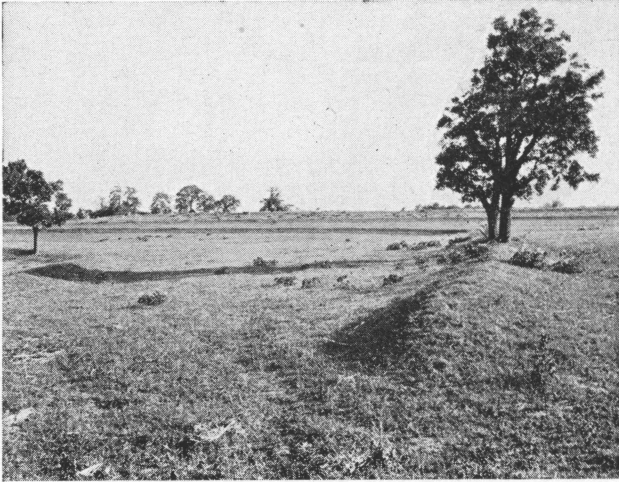
If there is a good arrangement of grass, shrubs and trees about the house itself that is often accepted as sufficient landscaping. This is a mistake, for every view from every part of the house and yard should be pleasing. Every view of the homestead from the public road should be attractive.

Convenience should be served by careful arrangement. To achieve this totally pleasing effect sometimes calls for the modification of the native growth and natural features about a home.

Since a part of landscaping is using every part of the land so as to secure the greatest efficiency for the entire arrangement, the goals in rural home landscaping coincide with certain portions of the Agricultural Conservation Program. When planning to improve a home the problem may also be approached from the landscaping viewpoint. This bulletin will deal with home improvement from the landscape approach.

When considered both from the material and from the spiritual standpoint, landscaping the country home is a powerful factor in conservation. While saving the soil, a most important factor, man himself must not be overlooked or underestimated. To overlook him and give all the attention to other things is very like pouring water on the smoke instead of the fire. If the soil is to be permanently improved the man upon the soil must also be improved. To be improved, he must not only have proper nourishment for his body but he must have proper nourishment for his spirit too. One substantial food for the inner man is beauty.

Man has a deep and ever present hunger for beauty which manifests itself in many ways. In fields along the public roads there are unpainted weather beaten houses where cotton is planted so near to the house that it is possible to stand on the door step and touch the plants. About some of these houses there are discarded boxes and



This pleasant pasture, now terraced and grown over with bermuda grass, was once a hot and dusty cotton patch which ran close by the front porch of a central Texas home.

The surprising growth of garden clubs, the popularity of publi-

rusty tin cans with flowers growing in them. To grow them has taken water. The many loops of rope at the well or the long path to the creek tell a pathetic story of the labor cost for the short lived beauty of these flowers



When cultivated crops were grown to the very threshold of this house the yard was marred by drifting hummocks of sand which persisted in forming. Now a planting of alfalfa entirely surrounds the homestead. The alfalfa stopped the forming of hummocks and stops much of the dust and mud which formerly reached the house.



cations dealing with home beautification and the steady improvement in the appearance of publications are among those things of today which indicate man's appetite for beauty.

The Agricultural Conservation Program provides an opportunity to rearrange the entire set up for many rural homes. This new arrangement may provide for beauty, comfort, convenience, and saving of labor in material production. When cultivated annual crops are grown to the very door of the home they give a pleasant outlook for only a part of the year. The rest of the year, when the crops have matured and have been harvested, they give a dreary totally uninspiring view from the house.

Such fields are a source of mud, dust, and glare. If they could be made into pastures and the more remote sections of the farm could be used for cultivated crops the satisfaction of living in the home would be increased. This arrangement is impossible in many instances, but in many others it is the sensible and practical thing to do.

A pasture of grass and shade trees with poultry or grazing livestock makes a beautiful and inspiring scene. It is a token of balanced farm programs. From a livestock management viewpoint it is more convenient and efficient to have the livestock pastures and poultry ranges near the house than far removed. The garden and orchard should be near the house and should be a part of the landscape plan.

Landscaping materials such as forest or post producing trees; grass; stones; fences; and cover crops are effective agencies for the conservation of soil. The Agricultural Conservation Act recognizes the economic value of trees, grass, and cover crops as soil conserving agencies and has listed their planting as items for which grants of money will be paid. If grants are to be paid for such plantings they must be made on crop land diverted from soil depleting crops; the plants and labor must not be furnished free by the state or federal government; and the farmer must include the planting in his application for the grant, showing such plantings were a part of the performance of the farm for which a grant is claimed.

Among the practices which entitle ranchmen to payment under



Grass, trees, shrubs, animals and water combined to make a scene of unusual beauty and stand for material prosperity.

the range part of conservation program are included reseeding ranges by deferred grazing; contour listing; construction of terrace ridges, spreader terraces, and spreader dams; earthen tanks; and rescuing range land from prickly pear, cactus, cedar, mesquite, and lechuguilla. Some of these practices can be used to improve the landscape and to put beauty around the farm home where beauty has not been before.

### **Consider Time To Come**

Never before have rural people had so much encouragement in making plantings and rearrangements which help in beautifying their homesteads. The wise ones are taking advantage of the present opportunity to achieve some of the improvements for which they have long planned.

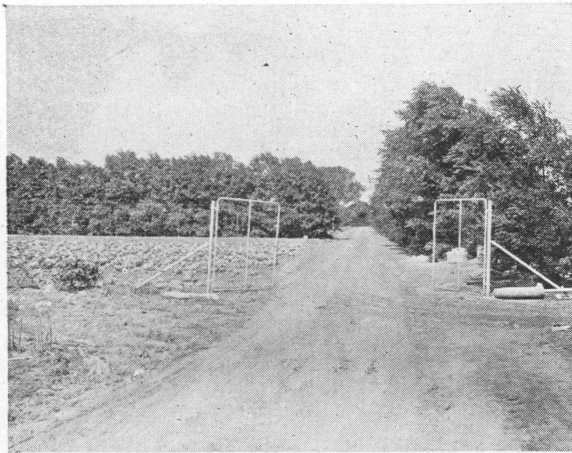
In this work it is well to remember that all plantings should be arranged with an eye to the future. Plans for planting may well be in sections to be accomplished in sequence. Each unit should go toward completing a pleasing picture. Helter-skelter planting, on the other hand, never produces the most satisfying results.

### **Beautify By Replacing Nature's Conservers**

To beautify the homestead is a noble and practical undertaking for it gives both physical and spiritual comfort. Barren plains and deforested hillsides are not pleasant or comfortable surroundings. Homes lacking the right setting are apt to depress and dwarf the spirits of the people therein. Children may go out from the home to become detrimental to the happiness and progress of America. Squalor imprints itself upon the souls of men. Children with environmental handicaps which detract from their individual development, rarely make the progress they might have made if they had a more pleasant background when growing up.

For the purpose of improving the appearance of our countryside, trees and grass, the great soil and moisture conservers, need to be reinstated on many Texas farms and ranches. Their reinstatement may take many forms, such as windbreaks, shade trees, screen plantings, woodlands or woodlots, poultry ranges, livestock pastures, orchards, recreational areas, and wild life production units. Each of these needed and useful plantings should be arranged to improve the appearance of the homestead.

Any Texas home not protected from winter and spring winds needs a good windbreak. A windbreak is of necessity a large planting and can be arranged with good effect as a background for the other units. This protection not only adds comfort to the home and saves fuel, but gardens and field crops produce more heavily when protected than when exposed to the drying winds and their destructive mechanical action. Poultry and livestock thrive better when shielded from harsh and cold winds.



Chinese elm trees with fern-like foliage make a wall against damaging winds. A planting of evergreens is to be added to this windbreak.

When trees are used to frame the house and soften its outlines they also supply pleasant shade and the moderating effect of forest cover. The cooling effect of trees is needed during every Texas summer. This defense against heat and cold is not only needed about the house, but animals and poultry need it very badly. Not only should they

have it from a humanitarian standpoint, but dollars and cents are involved in their getting it.

Poultry and dairy cows, swine and beef cattle must be shielded from extreme temperatures to make their best contribution to the family living. During periods of extreme temperatures many cattle in Texas have died from the lack of protection. Natural protection can be grown cheaper than artificial protection can be given. And the natural protection is usually far more attractive.

A planting of trees for a woodlot or woodland may be a beautiful and valuable addition to the place. It may serve many purposes besides producing wood for fuel and timber for posts and general construction work about the farm. It may be utilized to reinforce a windbreak, to conserve soil and water, to protect wild life, and to provide wholesome recreation. It can also be arranged to serve as an attractive background for the home. Exploring woods is a constant source of entertainment and training for youngsters and is one of the educational facilities which may be used to keep them at home.

An enclosure with trees and shrubs on a carpet of green should form the unit for chickens. Chickens in fenced and protected areas can be handled more efficiently than when they are allowed to run about the entire farm. Diseases can be controlled among them and the sanitation of the whole farm may be kept on a higher level. Since the beauty of a landscape is improved by the addition of a bit of green here and there, every farm plan should combine these two purposes in arranging and maintaining an all year chicken pasture.



**Turkeys add life and beauty to the scene.**

Yet another pleasant spot might be created of trees, shrubs, alfalfa, and grass. This, properly fenced, could serve as a range for turkeys; it is well known that these cannot be grown successfully with chickens. Trees which complete a landscape plan could be used as shade for this money producing area. The alfalfa or grass which adds green to the landscape in summer and winter can serve as pasture, a part of the beautification plan and as a soil building crop. Turkeys are very decorative and can be used effectively to add interest and life to rural landscapes. Since turkeys are native birds, they are more adaptable to Texas conditions than peafowls, pheasants and other imported fowls which are often used as decorative features of landscapes.

### **Fruit and Nut Orchards Should Be In Every Landscape**

The beauty of a fruit orchard in bloom is a memory to be cherished. To have such fairy-like beauty for a while each spring is worth the work of planting and caring for several trees. When the practical value of the fruit is remembered it becomes evident that no rural home landscape is complete without an orchard to add fruit to the family food supply. There are many nut trees that may be used for shade, and for completing the landscape picture. These trees with their deep delving roots together with a carpet of grasses or clovers stand as splendid protection against erosion by wind and water.



Many of the homes in the hilly sections of Texas are in dire need of plantings on their lawns and about the foundations of the houses to retain soil. Under the foundation stones or blocks of these houses the soil is several inches higher than that surrounding the house. This affords a measurement of the soil that has been removed by erosion since the house was built.

With a good planting of shrubs about the foundation, a few small terraces, and a good turf of grass the top layer of the soil could have been retained and the undermining action of erosion would have been prevented from threatening the foundation of the house. Good underpinning with native stone or lumber helps to protect the area under the house. At the same time the underpinning can serve to keep fowls and animals from under the house which reduces the menace of fleas.

Now and then shrubs and trees on hillsides and those near cuts by highway construction are uprooted by erosion. This could be prevented by terracing and the planting of grasses. Trees and shrubs alone cannot hold the soil when the slope of the land is great. But they are always helpful and should be aided in their beneficial work by terraces and retaining walls.

Another profitable and fortunate feature of planting trees is that they form a sanctuary for birds. Birds with their songs and their move-



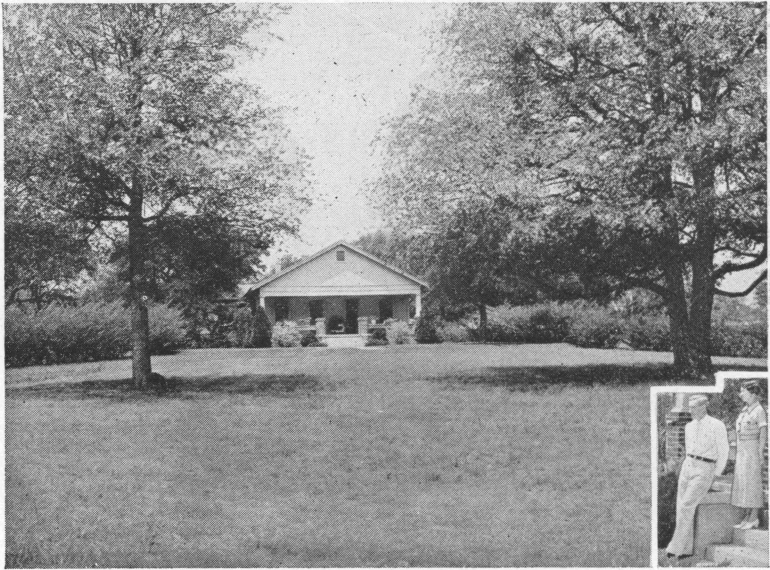
When it is impossible to have large smooth lawns for homes on rugged hillsides, the native loose rocks may be made into retaining wall, terraces, and rock gardens. When serving a useful purpose these constructions have a rare beauty born of appropriateness and fitness which they lack when used in flat counties. Here the rock garden backs up a swimming pool built on the slope of the hill.

ments give life and interest to any landscape. Also it is well known that the destruction of insects by birds permits the increased production of crops. For this reason birds are a practical as well as a beautiful addition to any rural landscape.

Each year that the trees grow they increase in beauty, usefulness, and monetary value. They are like a sum of money put out at a high rate of interest with good security.

### Use Grass to Develop and Conserve a Landscape

Grass forms the foundation, the base, and the canvas upon which the landscape picture is made. Grass is the carpet for the soil. Without it the whole effect would be barren and desolate. It is the great preservative of the landscape picture. Without grass and its millions of leaves and stems to hold back rain water, the action of erosion sets in and destruction begins. It not only hinders erosion, but often helps to rebuild eroded fields.



Once these attractive grounds were scarred by erosion. After 39 loads of dirt had been used for filling, the lawn was sodded. Now the trees, grass and shrubs will protect it from further deterioration.

A large area of grass adds appreciably to the comfort of a home. In summer it is constantly giving off moisture which has a definite cooling effect. It relieves the glare which is very strong on light barren soils. In wet weather it decreases the amount of mud and in dry weather it reduces the amount of dust.

## Some Grasses are Useful in Holding Soil

As in the case of trees, the section of the state determines in a measure the kind of grass which it is best to plant. Here again observation and common sense may be employed to an advantage. Buffalo grass is one of the most satisfactory varieties for a large portion of central and west Texas. It will withstand dry weather better than bermuda and does not spread to cultivated fields. It is nearly impossible to buy seed for it, but in a large part of the state sod can be obtained from pastures or from uncultivated and rough portions of fields.

At one time in central Texas it was possible to buy, or more often farmers would give the sod of this grass to those wanting a supply. Now this is not always true. Farmers have awakened to its value and are guarding its spots of refuge. To grow it for present use is to help conserve it for the future. If the low growing seed producing plants are used the lawn does not need mowing very often.

Bermuda is widespread over the state and makes a satisfactory growth where moisture is fairly abundant. It can be started from seed or by planting runners with roots. The quicker growth comes from the rooted runners. Bermuda unfortunately will not grow in shade.

Carpet grass grows well in the timbered section of east and south-east Texas and along the coastal plain as far south and west as Kingsville. For its best growth it needs almost continuous moisture and a temperature that ranges above 10°. Carpet grass seed is available from almost any seed house. A quicker and surer way of starting it is by sodding.

San augustine grass does well along the coast of Texas and inland including an area of 75 or 80 miles, parallel to the coast. It can be propagated by planting runners. If a start is not already to be found on the place, it can be bought from a nearby nursery. One value of this grass is that it will grow in dense shade.

Blue grass does fairly well in some parts of the state but grows best in North Texas when given sufficient moisture. This grass will grow in a shaded place better than bermuda.

Rescue grass is also very tolerant to shade and does well in the winter.

For winter lawn, italian rye grass may be sown in early fall on freshly cut grass. When it has been watered thoroughly it will come up and soon form a beautiful green lawn which will last all winter.

For other cheerful spots of green about the farm during winter, small grains and clover, or alfalfa may be planted. In addition to relieving the depressing wintry look, they form soil holding crops and make winter pastures for livestock. Clovers and alfalfa not only serve the two purposes above but also add nitrogen to the soil. The small grains can be turned under for green manure.

## Select Naturally Adapted Trees

In regions of the state where there is a native growth of trees, it is well to take a lesson from mother nature and plant those that are naturally adapted to that area. By looking about one can determine the native and the introduced species that give the most satisfactory growth and that are likely to be of the greatest practical value. When there are no native trees for guidance it would be well to consult representatives of the A. and M. Extension Service and the Agricultural Experiment Station.

Some trees may be used for many purposes. The black walnut is one of these. It makes a beautiful tree for using in the landscape plan; it gives a good shade; it furnishes food; and it produces a very valuable wood.

## All the Family Enjoy It

With a well landscaped home as a goal, working out the details is a constant source of pleasure to the entire family. With all working toward this pleasantly exciting achievement, there is developed a desirable unity of action which is needed in family life today. It at once makes for better family relations and raises the standard of living. It would be a rare child who had gone through the educational experience of helping to develop the landscape of his parental home who would be content to live on a barren eroded hillside without benefit of trees, shrubs, and grass when establishing his own home.

## The Plan Comes First

Dreaming dreams is not a waste of time. Dreams are practical and constructive if something is done about making them come true. No great building, no bridge, not even a highway, was ever built without the dream of that structure having existed first. The dream was put on paper; then it was called a plan. The making of the plan may have taken months or years, but once it was completed it became a valuable guide. Just as an engineer puts his dream on paper, so should everyone when planning arrangements or rearrangements for a rural home. The grants now being paid for soil conservation should not be overlooked as a means for making cherished dreams come true.

## Here is the Way to Begin

Think of and talk about all those units which should be a part of the farm or ranch. Then put these ideas on paper in the form of a plan. To make a plan, use a piece of paper about one and one-half feet or even two feet wide and about three feet long. A plain piece of wrapping paper will serve very nicely. A lead pencil with an eraser, a ruler with the inches divided into sixteenths, a piece of plain card-board, like that from the back of a writing tablet, should be gathered together. On the card-board make a rough map of the farm or ranch



snowing the house, well, barns, and lots. Then go out and step off the distances and carefully record the number of steps on the card-board map. The next thing is to get the big piece of paper and put down the map of your place to scale. Do this by letting one step be represented by one sixteenth of an inch. If the house is near the boundary, let one edge of the paper represent the boundary line. If the house is near the center of the farm or ranch, place the house in the middle of the paper. For the buildings and fences that may need to be moved use very dim or dotted lines. Sometimes the drawing of this map may be done by one of the school children who has such problems assigned in arithmetic.

After the house is drawn in, indicate enough space about the house for a grass lawn. If terraces or retaining walls are needed, show them on your map. Then plan for some space about the house for an outdoor living room, work areas, and a space for children to play. If special gardens such as a rose garden or herb garden are wanted they should be drawn into the plan. Trees for shade can be indicated by large circles. Shrubs about the foundation of the house and those used to screen off the work yard can be indicated by smaller circles.

Consider the well and whether or not the purity of its water is being endangered by the livestock pens, the toilet or the waste from



Hogs on ample green pasture with trees are an asset instead of a liability to a landscape.

the kitchen. If it is, they should be moved or a new location for a well should be chosen.

Next place the family vegetable garden near the kitchen. If the land near the house is not suitable for a good garden but could be made so, one-half to one acre should be terraced or drained and planted to soil building crops. Next one-half to one acre should be set aside for the orchard. It also should be placed near the house. Sometimes it can be made to serve as an auxiliary windbreak which helps protect the garden.

After the garden and orchard are located the poultry range should be located on the plan. If both turkeys and chicken are to be grown, the plan should place them as far apart as is convenient. The trees and shrubs used for shade and windbreaks should be carefully arranged to fit into the landscape picture. A hog pasture may next be made for keeping growing stock. It should be large enough to insure their getting plenty of green feed and allow plenty of room for good sanitation. The cow pasture should be put close to the barn or lot where the milk cows are to be fed and penned for milking.

Careful consideration of the winds will help to locate the windbreak and the woodlot, or woodlands if they are needed.

In making the plan remember that the ideal is to have a pleasant view from every window, door and porch of the house. Then the whole arrangement of buildings, pastures and plantings should make a pleasant view for those who pass by and for those who approach the house.



Sheep quietly grazing give a poetic touch.

## Bulletins Make Good Reading

Bulletins which may ordinarily be dry reading become almost exciting as they furnish idea after idea for a plan. It is quite easy to learn useful facts and use them when they are involved in the actual making of a landscape plan for the whole farm or ranch.

In planning the arrangement of the farm there are three bulletins which may be secured free through Texas county agricultural or home demonstration agents which make interesting reading. They are B-76, Beautifying Country Homes; F. B. 1132, Planning the Farmstead; and F. B. 1087, Beautifying the Farmstead. Each of these contains pictures and has diagrams showing possible arrangement of gardens, orchard, and pasture, shrubs and trees around the rural home.

If puzzled about the arrangement of livestock pens and farm buildings to insure the purity of drinking water, study "Rural Water Supplies." This bulletin is free and may be had from the State Health Department, Austin, Texas.

Read bulletins for help in planning a garden, orchard poultry ranges, livestock pastures, forestry and useful information about arranging these essentials to every country home. The following bulletins may be obtained free through Extension Service agents: C-76, Feeding the Family; B-70, Gardening; B-73, Home Orchards; B-71, Poultry Yard Equipment; B-72, Turkeys; B-98, Successful Hog Feeding; and B-82, Pastures.

Other bulletins useful in landscaping and conserving soil are B-51, Terracing Farm Land in Texas; F. B. 1405, The Windbreak as a Farm Asset; F. B. 1677, Planting and Care of Lawns; F. B. 1567, Propagation of Trees and Shrubs.

A publication that helps in planning to keep green pastures about the place most of the year is Bulletin 539, Small Grain and Rye Grass for Winter Pasture. It is free and may be ordered from the Agricultural Experiment Station, College Station, Texas.

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Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating.  
Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914.  
10M—1937.