



HOW TO WORK WITH

PERMAFROST-PROOF PLANTS

GARDEN GURU: *Agrostis, Inc.* JACKSON, WY

The faint of heart should steer clear of Jackson; it's cold for nine months out of the year! Landscape architects Heath Kuszak and R. Jason Snider divulge their secrets for planting a fuss-free landscape that can take a big chill. BY ARYN BEITZ



Most people have only visited Wyoming for winter skiing. What's the climate like year-round?

There are virtually no guaranteed frost-free days where we are in western Wyoming. This past year, summer—that is, days without snowfall—was only 119 days long. During the winter months, we typically get down to 30 or 40 below for a week or two.

How do such bitter temperatures influence your designs?

Climatic condition limit the available plant palette and landscaping materials, so it forces you to be creative with your planting schemes and methodologies. Some of our best performing plants for the harsh conditions include Aspen trees, which are well-suited for hillside sites and have a wonderful orange-gold fall color. Also, Spruce trees are very useful as visual screening or as a windbreak because their effects are almost immediate, and Redosier dogwoods are a favorite shrub because they tolerate a variety of growing conditions.

Given your proximity to world-class ski resorts, do your clients ever ask you to design ski-friendly landscapes?

We're working on a few residential projects right now that have direct access to Jackson Hole Mountain Resort. We often create ski trails into and out from a mudroom or garage entry on a home replete with a direct access spa.

What else do your ski-savvy clients ask for?

We have been seeing an uptick in the amount of vegetable gardens we include in our designs, especially for cool-season crops like lettuce, spinach, carrots, potatoes, and radishes. However, we do have some clients who can't live without their tomatoes or peppers. For those folks, we custom-design small greenhouses that allow them their favorites most of the year, minus those few weeks of 40 below! ❄️

INSPIRATIONS, TIPS, AND TOOLS FOR MAKING YOUR MOUNTAINSIDE GARDEN GROW

BOOKS ARE CHOCK-FULL OF SMART IDEAS

Sunset Western Garden Book, the *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, and *Cutting Edge Gardening in the Intermountain West* are three of Kuszak and Snider's favorites

BEFORE YOUR GROW, KNOW YOUR SOIL

A major issue often overlooked by DIYers is the quality and condition of your soil. Take a sample and get it tested at your local co-op. They can tell you what it is lacking for optimum growing conditions.

ELEVATE THOSE BEDS

Raised beds give you greater control over the soil quality and drainage. Also, the soil will thaw out sooner allowing for earlier planting than a conventional garden plot.