

How to Know if Your Yard is the Tacky One on Your Street

We've all seen it, we've all pointed at it and we've pretty much all lived beside it. The yard with tacky written all over it. What makes a house look like it is from What Not to Wear. Bottom line is it's you and your taste and love of dollar store trivialities.

Or, it's your friends and family and your weak-willed nature that fills your front yard with the abominable, plastic doodads. Well, stop it! Trade your crooked, bent-over, gardener's spine for a straight sunflower backbone.

Here's how to tell if your yard is part of the tacky tourist tour in your city:

- You have a ½ barrel spilling purple petunias (and the odd weed), surrounded by a medium-sized rock and a round dug-out area.
 - You have white, quartz pebbles in any part of your garden and especially beside the driveway in rectilinear rows of what resembles poodle-droppings.
 - You leave-up and plug-in your multicolored Christmas lights all year round.
 - You have a ceramic goose and you dress it up for all holidays including your dog's birthday.
 - You buy inflatables, of any variety; even at Christmas, they are not cool and if you have more than one be prepared for midnight pin-attacks; to watch it die slowly.
 - Too many colors in your planting arrangement. Red and yellow and pink and green, purple and orange and blue; I can see a rainbow, see a rainbow, see a rainbow too. Enough said.
 - Even worse than that??? Fake flowers. So, you have a black thumb or you're just lazy; let it go. Put some grass seed down instead. Fake flowers can melt in the sun, be covered with cat urine and they fade PDQ.
 - If you buy the following plants you are borderline (mind the pun) tacky: marigolds, petunias and begonias. These plants are wayyyy out of fashion (unless you grow marigolds in your herb gardens to put on salads). C'mon, really, get with the times and accept change. Go wild, throw in the odd Japanese Anemone or ornamental grass or really go crazy and throw in a gigantic allium that is bigger than your kid's head.
 - Garden sculptures and garden ornaments are all about the usage. So, you like garden gnomes. Garden gnomes are great, but moderation is the key. Or, if you're overly excited about the seven-million dwarfs, at bare minimum, keep them against the perimeter fence and out of the direct view of your neighbors windows. If you have them on your front lawn, whistling while they work, and NONE go missing by the end of the season, you know a) that no one wants the monstrosities and b) there are no such things as dwarfs or gnomes that come to life at night (or fairies for that matter).
 - Plastic; anything plastic (not resin that looks like concrete) is a huge no, no! Think, would you put that in your house (well, you probably would if you have any of these yard and garden features listed)? If you wouldn't, then think about this; your neighbors get a first impression of the interior of your home, by looking at the exterior. Also, your garden should be an extension of your home, like a room of its own.
 - House Butterflies. Ok, they were cute in the late 70's. You know what? No, they weren't even cute then. I bet some people have not bought a house that was up for sale because of the orange, metal monarch butterflies bolted to the side of the house instead of blissfully on their way to the mountains of Mexico.
 - A car on blocks looks, well, quite frankly abysmal.
 - Grass. Cut the stuff. If its soooo long you get bikini rash and wild animals come for dinner then you know it's too long.
 - Flags. One or two decorative flags are nice, provided you don't have any of the other stuff listed here, but more than that and oh my.
- If you are reading this, chances are you have some style and pizzazz which follows through to a stylish garden. Therefore, there is that person on your street that has many of these items. My advice to you: walk by and note the number of the house, print off this article and mail it anonymously. Feel free to add your own notation about that one thing that drives you crazy; sit back and watch the bonfire.
- Kate Robertson prides herself on seeing the humor in life. She is an avid gardening enthusiast and is a freelance contributing editor to <http://www.yardandgardendecor.com> — a site that offers information on garden arbors, wind chimes, weather vanes and more. By: Kate Robertson