

# Landscape Design

How to Plan, Design & Create  
the Landscape of Your Dreams



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## What is Landscape Design?

Landscape design is the art and science of planning outdoor space.



The science of landscaping is clear to most people: soil, plants, drainage, and the 'how to' construction parts of the work.

The artistic elements are not as easily defined. A qualified and experienced landscape designer blends form and function to create the unexpected. The art of design blends hard surfaces with soft lines and forms to create outdoor rooms for you to enjoy. The art encompasses plant colors and textures in pleasing and exciting new ways. And finally, the artistic aspect results in a landscape space designed just for you.





## Why is proper planning a good investment?

A creative, well conceived landscape is a valuable addition to your living environment. This outdoor space is an extension of your home and deserves the same creative thought and planning effort that goes into any other element of your surroundings. Whether you are going to install your landscape project yourself or want to have it installed by a landscape contractor, the goal is to accomplish a personalized landscape that meets your individual wants and needs.

A seasoned landscape designer works with practical knowledge of plants, soils, and garden architecture. The designer also understands the subtleties of contrasting texture and color, form and habit. This talent brings these elements together, combines them with your expressed preferences and fits them to your lifestyle. The results will go beyond what you expected.

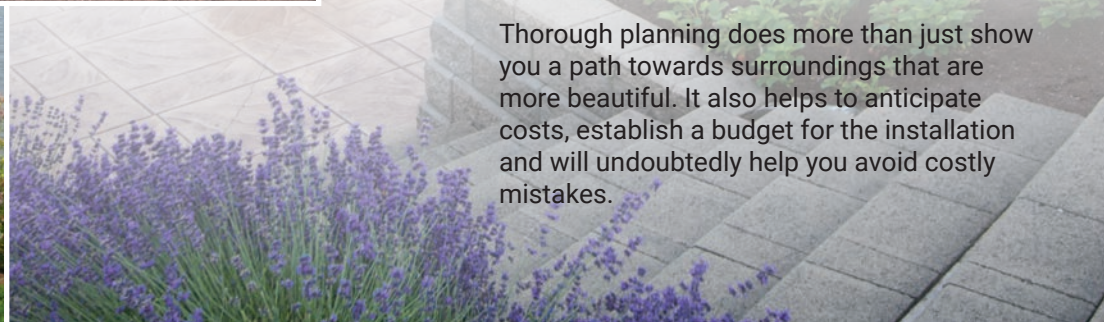
Before



After



A couple years later...



After



Before

**"An attractively designed garden can add significant worth to your property."**

Landscaping is an important investment in your home. Where an attractively designed garden can add significant worth to your property, a poorly planned landscape can actually diminish the value.

Many people have no long term plans or goals for their landscaping. While every home has landscaping few homeowners achieve the results they were seeking. A well designed landscape has a 'look' that adds esthetic value when compared to plain landscapes. This look is hard to describe, but professionally designed gardens are clearly noticeable. The flow of line, the combination of color and form make them obvious, even to the untrained eye. Truly remarkable landscapes are not the norm, but this does not have to be the case.

Thorough planning does more than just show you a path towards surroundings that are more beautiful. It also helps to anticipate costs, establish a budget for the installation and will undoubtedly help you avoid costly mistakes.





## What do I need to know before I talk with a designer?



**You need a basic idea of what you want to accomplish and what features you want to have in your landscape.**

Skilled questions asked by a good designer are a very important aspect of the design process, and will reveal options you may not have considered. It will allow you to make informed choices about design options.

Information and specific ideas that you share with your designer will help to personalize the garden plan. Before your initial meeting with the designer, write down a few basic ideas:

### **General Style:**

What is your style? What will coordinate well with your house? The purpose of a landscape plan is to provide you with a garden that is especially for you.



### **Likes & Dislikes:**

Prepare a list of plants that you know you want (or want to avoid). The list can be simple or complex. It might even be just a list of colors you prefer, whether you are a novice or an experienced gardener.

### **Property:**

Have a good idea of the property boundaries and any restrictions covered by neighborhood covenants regarding views, tree selection, etc. Are there homeowner's association regulations or procedures to follow?

### **Personal Priorities:**

Do you want something special? For example, if you would like a place to entertain large groups or room for a trampoline, your designer needs to know this so these special features can be blended into the landscape. If there are other features to be considered in the future, let your designer know. A talented designer can usually demonstrate how these elements can be brought to life.

### **Identify Problems:**

Discuss problems such as areas that stay too wet, areas that are too hot or sunny to enjoy, slopes that seem unmanageable, and other features that you would like to remedy. Your designer will then address these difficult situations and find creative solutions.



## How do I choose a designer?

You may have heard about a designer from friends, family or co-workers, someone they worked with in the past, an individual or firm that really exceeded their expectations. This type of positive referral is important and is the mark of a reputable firm. Even with this, do not hesitate to ask this firm for further information and references.

Be sure to mention that you were referred and by whom. The designer should do everything in their power to make sure they live up to your expectations.

If you do not have a good referral source, then do some shopping:

### Internet & Directories:

Look for Landscape Designers, Landscape Architects and Landscape Contractors in your area. See if anything in the listing seems to apply directly to your project. For example, if it mentions that they design and install work, and you are looking for that type of service, then this would be one obvious choice.

### Experience:

Find out how many years they have been in business and how long they have been practicing in the landscape design field.

### Home or Trade Shows:

This would be an opportunity to interview several prospective designers in one location.

### Garden Centers:

Ask at your favorite garden center. They interact with many individuals in related trades, and their customers undoubtedly give them feedback.

After you've narrowed your search, select two or three designers who seem to match your criteria. Ask to see copies of recent plans and be sure to get a couple referrals.



## What should I expect when I call a professional for landscape design services?

Your initial contact with a landscape designer should help you determine a few basic facts:

### Specialties:

Ask if the designer does your type of work: Do they consider themselves specialists in residential work or commercial work? Do they enjoy renovations or mostly designs for new gardens?

### Services Offered:

Besides design, do they also install landscape work?

### Initial Consultation:

Find out if the initial consultation is done at no cost and without obligation. Some professionals will offer to make an initial site visit to determine the extent of the services you need. This should be a relatively brief visit so that the designer can see your site and give you an estimate of design fees.

### Fees:

Ask for their hourly rate and how many hours usually go into one of their typical plans, keeping in mind that all landscape projects are different. Sometimes a lower hourly rate won't be a bargain if the planning takes longer or the plan content is poor.



## Do I need a landscape plan if I am going to install the work myself?

The goal is to create a unique, attractive and colorful landscape that reflects your taste and style. With plan in hand, you will have one of the main tools required to create a truly personalized garden.

All plans should be drawn to scale, but a professional landscape design service should be able to provide several levels of planning to the client who wants to do their own work:

### Site Consultation:

If you have a small or specific area that you want to enhance, a site visit with a design professional to discuss the area in question might be all that is needed. An hour or two of focused conversation with or without quick sketches could answer many questions you have and help you maximize the look of that specific area.

### Conceptual Plans:

Conceptual or preliminary plans will show the general layout and features such as lawn and planting areas, patios, arbors, water features and any other elements on your list. A plan at this level would also show the intent of the overall planting scheme - what could be called the 'structural' plantings. If you are an experienced gardener, or want to have a real hands-on experience, this might be the level of consultation you need.



A conceptual plan should show the location of special features such as decks, patios, retaining walls and so forth, but might not include much in the way of construction detail. A plan of this level might not offer details on grading or elevation changes.

A conceptual plan should be detailed well enough to establish a construction material list and an idea of cost for these materials.

### Working Plans:

Working plans take the process a step further and usually involves one or two additional meetings with your design consultant. The working plan can have considerably more content.

This information can include the following:

**Grading:** Elevation changes, approximate or exact, shown on plan.

**Plants:** Showing all plant names and locations.

**Decks, Patios, etc:** Final dimensions with elevations and grades if relevant.

**Details:** Sometimes specific construction details of arbors, decks and patios are included when needed or requested.





## Should I consider a landscape contractor who offers design services?



Before



During



After

You can employ a landscape architect or design firm to create your plan, but most residential landscape plans are created by a designer in a landscape construction company that offers a 'Design-Build' relationship with their customers.

### What is Design-Build?

Design-Build is a popularly trending construction model that allows all aspects of a landscaping project to be brought under one roof, where designers and builders in a single company plan and work together to facilitate the most efficient, cost effective and shortest project completion cycle possible, for the benefit of their customer.

The Design-Build model contrasts with the more traditional Design-Bid-Build construction model, which has two or more separate entities that the customer has to find and then manage relationships with. This takes them through a typically longer and more difficult project cycle to manage.



There's nothing like  
watching your garden...  
***come to life!***



### Phased Construction:

A working landscape plan will allow you to have your project installed in phases to suit your budget and timetable. You may require a contractor for the initial site development phase and then plan on working on the additional phases at your own pace.

After the plan is finished and construction is underway, the real joy of the experience begins. As your landscape comes to life, you will see how your ideas were combined with the designer's skill and the insight to create an environment built especially for you.

Season after season, as the garden matures, fresh aspects will emerge. As the garden grows, it seems to take on a life of its own.

Improving your existing landscape or building a visually stimulating new one can result in much more than just a pretty garden. The time and effort invested in this enterprise will result in not just what you find attractive, but will also increase property values. The work enhances your home as well as your neighborhood. Most importantly, it also rewards you with your own personalized outdoor space - a place that is functional and beautiful.



Before



After



Call for a FREE Site Visit!

*Serving residential and commercial  
customers in Puget Sound since 1977.*



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