



# THE LANDSCAPE CONSULTANTS

Your design and installation team



## Making Your Landscape Dreams Come True

### BASIC LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Before you can begin to design the garden of your dreams or renovate the one that you have, you have to ask yourself a few questions. (This step still holds true if you are having a Landscape Designer create a design for you.) What are your basic needs for the yard and also what are the things that you may want in the future? It is better to plan for them now and have space allotted for pools, hot tubs, and gazebos, than to renovate your yard several times over.

1. Do you have children that need room to play – large lawn areas, sandboxes, and swing sets.
2. Do you need a place for a dog run – a fenced area not to disrupt the flow of the yard?
3. Are you going to be doing a lot of outdoor entertaining – large patios, deck areas, or lawn area for setting up tents?
4. Do you want low-maintenance – no lawn, just ponds and gardens or mostly lawn with basic gardens?
5. Is there going to be a pool, hot tub or pond – make sure you have the room for these items and that the scale of the water is correct to the yard space.
6. A large or small vegetable garden with a greenhouse – find the sunniest spot in your yard.
7. Do you want private seating areas within the garden – it is nice to have outdoor rooms within your yard.
8. do you want to attract wildlife into the yard – check for plants that have berries or bright coloured flowers, just remember do not plant berried bushes too close to your sitting area as bird can be messy?
9. Do you need to block out a building or make the yard private – look to plant more mature trees immediately so you obtain instant privacy, and then plant smaller plants in the rest of the yard, they will grow.

So, now put your list in order, prioritizing by putting the things you consider most important at the top and work your way to the bottom of your list.

You will need to consider a few more things before you can take pencil to paper and start your design.

If you are going to have a children's play area, then you will probably want it visible from the kitchen window; if it is a vegetable garden that you are wanting, then it will need the sunniest spot in the yard, (if you have just moved into your house then you will need to watch the sun and record the sunny and shady areas of the yard, also remember the time of the year changes the sun's location, so make sure you take that into account). If entertaining is that you will be doing, then a large deck to extend your living area out into the garden will most likely do the trick.

Now you are ready to start drawing out your yard on paper. Measure and sketch the property lines, house, existing trees and shrub, and all structures that will remain within your yard (do not include any items that will be dug up or torn down). Measure and indicate on your drawing, existing walks, driveways, decks, garden sheds and porches that will remain part of the landscape. Indicate which way is north, this way you will be able to know where the sunny and shady spots are in the yard.

Okay, now you will be getting to the exciting part. Forming the beds decks patios, walkway, gardens, and ponds.

There are three important elements to think about when designing – form, colour and texture. You may even want to add to that scent, repetition, variety, sequence, balance, emphasis, and scale. All of these elements will help to blend, making your garden flow so that it is not only pleasing to the eye, but to the touch and smell as well.

**Form** – the shape defined by line is probably the most enduring element in garden design. Every plant has a distinct growth-habit, a unique mass and volume, which as it develops and grows, changes the form of the garden. These shapes – pyramidal, weeping, columnar, spreading, and round, all divide and define the garden. Planting a specific plant may block a view or open a sight line. The form of plants selected and their placement in the garden are important in creating comfortable dynamic spaces with pleasing silhouettes. This element holds true for the shapes of the gardens, patios, decks, sidewalks and pathways within your garden.

**Colour** – this can be anything from a monotone of greens with just a splash of one colour, to a kaleidoscope of colour in all four seasons. When choosing plants, ask what they do in the different seasons. Of course there are the ones that flower and so all you have to do is choose the colours you like. But don't forget to ask when the plants bloom so that you can cover as many seasons as possible with flowering plants. However many plants change colour in the early spring as new growth emerges or as the weather changes temperature in the fall. Some plants have anything from colourful berries, variegated leaves, very lacy branch structure when they are leafless, to having beautiful peeling bark that will all add colour to your garden.

**Texture** – this element creates depth to your garden – from a distance it is the quality of light and shadows within the garden making patterns which translates into texture. When up close, it is the size and shape of the leaves, bark and twigs that become the predominant texture of the plant. Rough, coarse textures create an informal look, while fine, smooth textures look formal and elegant. Fine textured plants look as if they are farther away than they are, making a small yard look bigger.

**Scent** – specific fragrances, like colours can evoke emotional feelings and help create a mood or sense of time, maybe even fond memories like childhood days spent in Grandmas garden or your wedding day.

**Repetition** – this is the continuing thread in a garden. When any design element is repeated the mind is better able to understand the composition as a whole and so a sense of order is introduced. Repetition is simply holding one design quality constant while varying the others.

**Variety** – is the opposite of repetition, but when it is overdone by adding too many elements, chaos results, so it is a fine balance between repetition and variety is needed to achieve flow to your landscape.

**Sequence** – is the movement within your garden. Sequence helps to connect the dots between various design elements. This can be achieved by using textures in graded steps from fine to coarse, or by alteration, a repetition of two or more contrasting features. This can be achieved with using leaves of shrubs, mosses, ground covers, gravel, rocks, and stepping-stones.

**Balance** – one form of balance relates to the layout of the garden, formal or symmetrical arrangements are exactly the same on either side, while informal or asymmetrical arrangements are unlike in either side. Either way the elements being balanced on both sides must both hold the same importance before you can achieve balance. Another form of balance is that which is between evergreen and deciduous plant material within your garden. The evergreen plant material is like the skeleton of your garden and the deciduous is the colourful filler. If you can achieve this balance then your garden will look good in an season.

**Emphasis** – the parts of any garden should not be equal in their visual interest, certain parts should be different, perhaps larger, of contrast in colour, an object of art, something with vertical height or perhaps a pathway takes your eye down it, making you want to follow it. Again if too many elements are introduced, the effect is lost and the garden becomes cluttered.

**Scale** – is concerned with the relationship between the size of an object, to the size of the other objects within the same design. Scale will bring harmony to the garden, all the elements of the garden should agree in the sense they bring together the size of the whole within the design. Example: a dwarf plant is out of scale among tall trees. The same is true for a large house with small gardens and plant material; the scale being off makes the house look even larger.

Just remember when choosing your plants that you need to know the following:

- **how tall the plants are at maturity**
- **if the plants are evergreen or deciduous**
- **when they flower or if they do**
- **do they have any other qualities like berries, cones, colourful bark or branches, fall colour change, variegated foliage, scent**

Now all you have to do is use these basics elements when you are placing the plant material onto your design and you should have a professional looking landscaped yard.