



Gardeners Helping Gardeners Succeed

2450 S. Curry Street, Carson City, NV 89703

Tel:775-882-8600 Fax:775-882-7285

License #16114

www.greenhousegardencenter.com

Basic Landscape Design

David Ruf

Owner, Greenhouse Garden Center

The type of landscape you ultimately choose offers guests a first impression of your home, defines your outdoor living space, dictates time necessary for maintenance, and affects resale.

The following is a list of basic considerations that will assist you in defining your landscape style that will facilitate installation and maintenance.

Time

The single most important consideration in landscape style and installation is the time required to maintain the landscape as you have chosen to install it. Whether it is a high maintenance cottage garden or a low maintenance xeriscape, take the time to decide just how many hours per week, during the growing season and the dormant season, you are willing to devote to maintenance. Do you really have time to do all that you want to do or does Bunko, college basketball, or kids soccer define your free time? What hobbies do you enjoy which may interfere with yard maintenance? Summer boating? Travel? Are you just a couch potato by nature?

Architecture

The style of your home often dictates the basic landscape appropriate – at least for the front yard. Behind closed gates, you can do whatever you want with the backyard! Seriously, selecting a basic landscape concept that is compatible with your home and neighborhood architecture is important. No one wants to live next door to the Tudor - landscaped in southwestern style. Take the time to drive around your neighborhood and neighborhoods like yours and look at what others have done. Take pictures, ask questions, make drawings, check out books at the library. Be aware before you begin.

Also, make notes about architectural elements that you may want to camouflage – bus stops, light poles, power boxes, and trash receptacles. While you're at it, make notes about other areas in the yard you may need to camouflage – pesky neighbors, bright streetlights, RV parking.

Environmental Concerns

You may basically plant whatever you want, but in order for your yard to thrive, you need to take into consideration the basic environment – sun (yard orientation), wind, soil, alkali, boron. . . .

- A. Buy a ph test kit and test your soil. The UNR Cooperative Extension can also perform this test for you.
- B. Try digging a test hole: is your soil sandy or did the hole require a digging bar or blasting caps?
- C. Start a garden journal. Make notes regarding the sun and shade patterns created in your specific yard. This is as important in the winter as in the summer.
- D. Check out wind patterns in your yard. Are there existing plants which seem to be always stressed because of the wind? How does the wind affect your watering patterns?

Function

Take the time to consider exactly what it is you want to do in and with your yard. Will you be planning weddings, graduation parties, or large gatherings that require patio area? Do you play volleyball, football, badminton and croquet in your back yard, or do you plan on doing so? Do you require RV or boat parking areas? What about a swimming pool or pond? Do you need large grassy areas for kids to play? Dog runs or horse paddocks? Paths and walkways? Does your RV or boat require an extra wide gate that you need to take

into consideration before landscape installation? How will you get the lawnmower from the front yard into the back yard?

Special Considerations

Here's a fun section. Let's talk allergies – does scotch broom make you sneeze? Find out before you plant it or other high pollen content plants. Do you have children that put everything under the sun in their mouths? Some plants have berries that may cause big tummy aches. Do your dogs dig incessantly? Are you planning on acquiring special needs pets like desert tortoises? Is someone in your household going to require site specific ramps and bars in order to move around the outdoors successfully and safely? How about pests (not neighbors) but deer, rabbits, voles, and moles?

Resale

Let's face it, someday you may need to sell your castle. Will it have enough curb appeal to attract a suitable buyer? If you're staying for life, come heck or high water, do whatever you want. If not, you may want to temper your selections with resale dollars in mind.

Color-Style-Personality

I'll bet you never thought we'd get to this part. Here's your chance to express yourself AFTER you've taken into consideration the previous six points.

- A. Color: Look in your closet, check out the colors you are most attracted to – what color is your car? Your home? Your fence? As important as what colors you like are colors you DON'T like.
- B. Style: What did you decide? Cottage, xeriscape, woodland, native? How about a dry riverbed?
- C. Personality: Here's your chance to shine! Will you make selections that have bright wild color combinations or will you select soft and delicate color schemes? Will your planting be sparse while you wait for things to grow in, or will you "pack it in" for immediate gratification? Are you interested in fragrance or attracting butterflies or hummingbirds?

Get Help!

Pick the brains of those in the industry whose job it is to know. Talk to qualified nurserymen, landscapers, parks employees, Cooperative Extension employees, and neighbors who are successful gardeners. All joking aside, you wouldn't choose a novice plumber or electrician. Do yourself a favor and forge a lasting relationship with someone in the nursery and/or landscape industry.

Visit parks and zoos for ideas at different times during the year. Take a Master Gardener class. Read, Read, Read. Look at lots of pictures in magazines, postcards, and in advertising. Create a file so that you have something to refer back to. Keep tags from plants you've had success with and make notes about plants that were abysmal failures. Draw a basic plan and review and revise it as necessary. Invest in some landscape spray paint and draw some lines to make plant spacing choices. It's much easier to make changes on paper than it is to remove sod and sprinklers incorrectly placed or dig up trees and shrubs.