

Landscape Plans

No matter how brilliant your home's design may be, it's just not finished on the inside until you find the accessories that transform it from a house into a home. It's the same on the outside. No matter how much you love your home's exterior, it's just not complete until your landscape provides the finishing touch.

Landscape plans vary in price and size. They can be little – for the homeowner who is already enjoying a mature landscape but wants to rework a certain area; or they can be all encompassing – for new construction. Whatever your landscaping need, it's best to find a landscape professional before you start thinking you can handle the job yourself.

Dan Riesdorf of Mileagers, Inc. has received many calls from homeowners who have tried to save money by starting to do their landscaping without a plan. "It is difficult to tell a homeowner that they made some wrong choices and that a great deal of what they already started



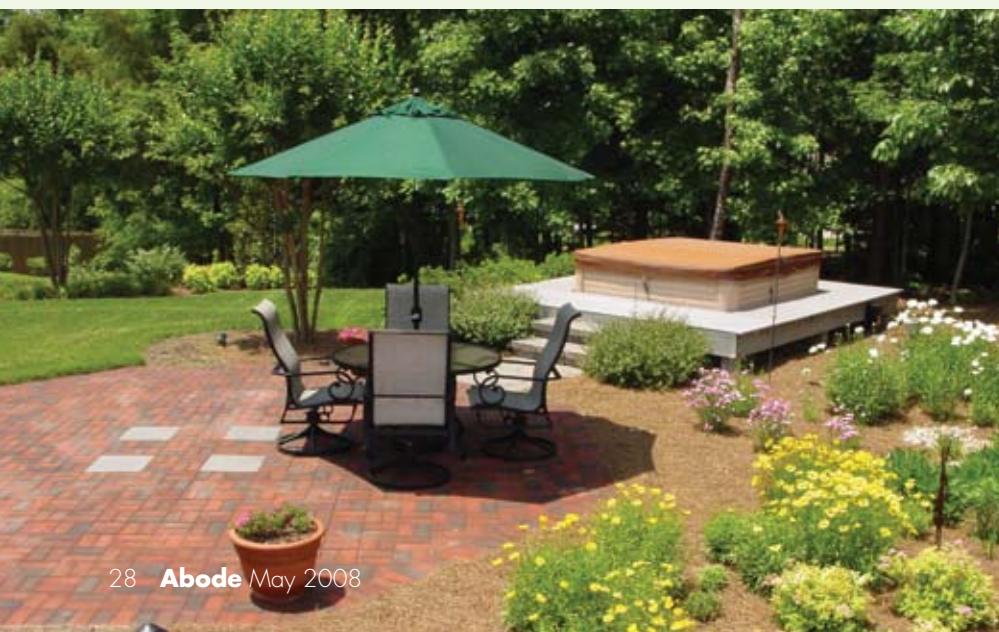
"A person would never start building a house without architectural plans. The same approach should be taken with the exterior space of your house. You need a plan that creates places for you to live, function, enjoy, and invest... outside. There is no difference."

– Dan Norris,
Stano Landscaping, Inc.

has to be done over. Often proper grades were not established and they are having drainage issues. More often trees and plantings were installed too close to the house and/or too close together," said Riesdorf. "The costs involved with fixing the mistakes almost always exceed the cost of a landscape plan."

Homeowners need to look at a landscape plan as a map for exterior construction. It works in conjunction with site surveys, grading maps, and building plans. A basic landscape plan will show hardscaping elements like patios, walkways, and driveways as well as plant selections. Elevations and detail drawings or phasing plans may be included as well. In the case of new construction, it is best to contact a landscape designer or architect when the early architectural drawings are being started. With this approach, driveway and walkway layouts may be adjusted to create a more interesting landscape design. Also exterior electrical outlets for future lighting or sleeving under walks and driveways for future irrigation piping can also be addressed. Too often the house is finished and the concrete is poured before considering the upcoming landscape design.

Phasing plans allow you to complete your landscape plan in stages. These plans can be tackled by isolating different areas



or by breaking the project into tasks. A project may also need to be phased in to mimic a natural process. For instance, when developing a woodland garden you would first install some shade trees. Once a shady canopy has established, you can plant the understory and groundcover.

One of the downsides of phasing in a landscape plan is that the first phase is usually the most expensive because it encompasses hardscaping, large tree planting, irrigation systems, and establishing the lawn. When you get a landscape professional involved early, instead of phasing in a landscape design, you can include the costs of landscaping in your original mortgage. The critical factor is having the design plan and cost estimate prepared well in advance.

Some homeowners worry that when they put their landscape design into the hands of a professional they won't be able to incorporate their own personal touches. Nothing could be further from the truth. A good landscape professional will ask all sorts of questions – from your favorite colors and your entertainment needs to maintenance expectations – so they can get a better feel as to what you are looking for. Knowing the answers to these questions and more ensures that the designer will create a landscape that caters to your desires.

Amee Lapke from LandWorks, Inc., Daniel Reisdorf from Milaege's Inc., and Daniel Norris from Stano Landscaping, Inc. shared their expertise for this article.

Opposite Page: Rendering courtesy of LandWorks, Inc. Photo courtesy of Stano Landscaping, Inc.

“Proper siting and spacing of plants can make maintenance more manageable for the homeowner. Rely on your designer to place plants where they have ideal light, soil, and moisture conditions. They can also introduce you to native species that can save on watering and pesticide applications.”

– Amee Lapke,
LandWorks, Inc.

This Page: From left to right, photos courtesy of Stone Oak Landscapes, Inc., Milaege's Inc., and Merrill Hills Landscape Co.

With the help of your landscaper, you can plan your yard around what you love. You'll be able to personalize your retreat with your favorite colors & textures and a mixture of plantings that work with your lifestyle, your lot and your budget.



SUN GARDEN



SHADE GARDEN



SLOPED TERRAIN

Be sure to take into consideration the amount of light your planting will get and the type of terrain.