

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: 101

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Are you thinking about creating a new landscape or renovating an old one? Maybe you are building a house and are beginning to think about the landscaping process? What follows are some helpful ideas to consider when either doing it yourself or working with a professional landscape designer in creating a landscape that is truly a reflection of you and your family's needs and lifestyle.

- **Get inspired!** You can get wonderful ideas from thumbing through your favorite magazine, searching the internet, visiting public parks or even a friend's garden. If you are working with a designer, I would suggest that you have at least a few "inspiration" photos in order to give him/her an idea of the style of landscape you are wanting.
- **Take cues from the architectural style of your home.** Your landscape is the first thing a guest encounters when visiting. It is an extension of your home. You want to make sure that your landscape supports the style of your house. For example, a tropical plant pallet is a poor choice for a two story colonial home.
- **Consider your vantage points.** It's always good to remember the view from the street but, also remember to consider the views from prominent windows. For example, the kitchen window, master bedroom, family room or any room you tend to spend most of your time in.
- **Make a list of garden features.** Do you want to have an herb garden, a bird garden, water feature, dog run or even a cistern? Deciding ahead of time the features you want in your landscape will make the whole process easier. Again, if you are using a professional, having this information to give him/her at the first consultation will make the design process move along much quicker.
- **Consider your lifestyle.** Do you have children or pets? Do you entertain frequently outdoors? Do you travel much making a low-maintenance yard a must? Make a list of your needs to ensure your plan reflects your personal lifestyle. In addition, consider how your needs may change in the near future.
- **Maintenance is another important consideration.** If you are interested in year round color through the use of annuals and perennials you will have to consider how much time and money you are going to spend on upkeep and seasonal annual plantings. If you are not willing to do it all your self, you will

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have to think about hiring a gardener and for some; this could put a strain on the wallet.

- **Water issues are extremely important in our community.** If you have drainage problems, make sure you and or your designer have considered this. Trying to create a garden or lawn area in a spot with poor percolation without the proper site preparations could lead to dead plants and a very frustrated homeowner!
- **Choosing the right plants.** If you are not an avid gardener, try visiting a reputable garden center where the staff can help you. Take in pictures of your space and let them suggest plants that will work. Another option is culling information from books and the internet. Just make sure you select plants that thrive in our zone (8b). Again, if working with a professional, your designer will make the plant suggestions and you will need to let them know what appeals to you.
- **Get it on paper!** Having a plan drawn out on paper will help you estimate how many plants and other materials you'll need. It will also make it easier to install your landscape in phases without sacrificing continuity. If you are not comfortable with the drafting process, this is where you will benefit from hiring a professional.

Remember that Landscape designs for new homes sometimes have special requirements. Many subdivisions, including Southwood and Golden Eagle, have strict guidelines and specific plant requirements. Formal landscape design documents are frequently mandatory for getting approval for the project from the Home Owners Association or other governing bodies. You will need to check with your builder, designer and/or the Home Owners Association to make sure your landscape design reflects these guidelines.

Assessing your needs and creating a well thought out plan are essential in beginning any new project. Building a personal, functional and beautiful outdoor space is an endeavor that should reward you and your family many times over.

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