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Landscaping for Increased Property Value

Landscaping is much more than pretty plants—a good landscape design can add 20 percent to the value of your property and save up to 25 percent in heating and cooling costs.

A professionally landscaped property is a sure ticket to quick resale. It gives a home curb appeal, a sense of place and value. "It's the first thing you see," says Joan Honeyman, of Honeyman Landscape Architecture in Washington, D.C. That first impression can add 20 percent to your home's value, a figure that rivals the return on a new kitchen or bath.

Landscaping Basics

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) recommends that homeowners invest 10 percent of the home's value in landscaping. Landscape architecture goes beyond plantings, or softscaping, to include structural features like lighting, fences, garden paths, fire pits, swimming pools, and ponds. Outdoor rooms, terraces, and decks are also high-yield structural or hardscaping investments. A landscape architect can work with the client to generate a detailed plan. Typically, the homeowner then hires a general contractor, landscape contractor, or subcontractor to perform the installation.



Landscaping goes way beyond flowers and trees to include walkways, exterior lighting, patios, fences, decks, and pools.

Assessing and Planning Your Landscape

The first step in landscape renovation is a property assessment. A qualified arborist can help distinguish between dying trees and those that just need a bit of care and attention. "Homeowners will also want to look at what's overgrown, what's obscuring windows, what needs to be pruned or taken out," says Honeyman. A certified landscape architect will help you choose which plants and flowers are best suited to your region and lifestyle.

Landscape architects generally look at key areas of enhancement. An on-grade patio, an above-grade deck, a front walk, complementary plantings in the front yard, and exterior lighting are all desirable. Exterior lighting goes beyond security to showcase the natural world at night using up-lights, down-lights, and tree-lights.

Landscaping Trends

Possibly the hottest trend in landscape architecture—particularly in temperate climates—is the outdoor room or terrace extension. "We're seeing a lot of



Hiring a Pro

When hiring a landscape architect, go with a licensed professional. ASLA certified architects give you a detailed plan that your contractor can follow and one that you, or your

family rooms with an adjacent outside terrace that marries the inside with the outside. We bring views into the house using fountains, a grove of trees, or arbors," Honeyman says. Using building materials that complement the inside help the spaces read fluently from one to the other.

The interest in landscaping and property enhancement is a natural extension of the boom in home renovation and improvement. Homeowners are paying more attention to the link between indoors and outdoors. "People are making a better connection to the environment and their outdoor space," ASLA Vice President Rob Tilson says. "They are investing more in the rear of their property. The home improvement boom is driving that engine," he says.

Beware of Landscaping Pitfalls

Perhaps the biggest mistake homeowners make is a piecemeal approach to landscaping. Homeowners begin projects, start to clear areas, put in a mix of plants, and proceed without a plan. The result is a hodgepodge of plantings and gardens that give the property a disorganized feel. An implemented professional landscape design provides a polished look. Following a professionally prepared plan will lead the homeowner to a beautiful property while remaining within a pre-established budget.

Keep it Green

It is important to protect your landscaping investment and keep your property looking its very best. A landscape designer or landscaper can help you devise a schedule for upkeep and maintenance. Be honest with yourself—if you do not have the time or the inclination to maintain your exterior plantings, engage the regular services of a landscaping maintenance company. Also, make sure that you discuss maintenance with your landscape designer—he or she will specify low-maintenance vegetation if gardening and backyard puttering are not your thing.

Most of all, remember that everything doesn't have to happen at once. Consider a five-year plan that has plantings maturing at varying rates and adds various features each year. This way you can remain within your budget—time-wise and cost-wise—while still progressing toward a complete landscape renovation.

Text by Joyce L. Carroll
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landscaping maintenance company, can manage. These four-year degreed professionals know about botany, horticulture, engineering, and design. They are also experts in property grading, soils, and irrigation. If you're looking for a quick sketch and some basic advice, your local home and garden center has designers that can help. If you're planning on installing permanent structures, look to a professional. Like all building projects, this is an investment in your property—so get the guidance of a professional before you begin.



Proper plantings can save you money on your energy bill. Trees provide wind breaks that reduce energy demand in the winter and give shade to the property during hot summer months.