

I. The Landscape Design Process:

A. Site Assessment and preparing a base map

Keep a file of all the plants, materials, and other elements that you want in your design. They will become your palette from which to choose when it comes time to use them.

Consider:

Physical attributes: orientation and exposure, light, slope, soil, existing vegetation and features to keep, property lines, placement of house, driveway, and other built features

Context: surrounding characteristics of the property: rural? urban? architecture? local/HOA ordinances; views from your house

Opportunities and challenges: views, micro-climates, erosion/flooding risks, noise, privacy, others?

B. Functional assessment

What do you want to do on your property? Work spaces? Play areas? Gathering? Gardening? Attract wildlife? Show? Create an area for seclusion?

C. Connecting your functions

How will the different areas of your property relate to each other?

How will you connect them?

Primary and secondary paths

D. Select your geometry, and stick with it

Biomorphic

Rectilinear

Axial, non-axial, diagonals

E. First Draft!

II. Final Design

You have identified your site's physical attributes, it's good and not-so-good features, and what will remain in your final design. You know what you want to do on your land, and how those different activities will relate to each other in the way of paths or "circulation".

Now you can really play with the design tools that will help you create a satisfying landscape or garden.

II. Some design considerations

Organizing space

Entry - gates, arches, forecourts, verticals

Travel - material, hidden vs direct

Arrival/travel/arrival

Open/enclose

Mass and void

Hide/reveal

Corridor/node

Coherence cohesion through consistent geometry, repetition, and sequence

Foreground/midground/background

Framing or widening views

Changing levels

Ramps and steps - shallow slow, steep fast

Retaining walls, cut and fill

IV Selecting materials

Plants - Structural, design layers, ground layer

Paths - Stone, concrete, pebble, wood chip

Patios - Stone, concrete, decking, pebble

Walls - Timber, stone, concrete, veneers

Fences - Hedges, woods, synthetics, metal etc.

Additional embellishments

Lighting

Water

Art

Irrigation

V. Some Dos and Don'ts

Design:

Try to edit existing features before settling on your design-it may be enough.

Start from the house and work out.

Start with overall structure or architecture, then refine to the level of plant choice.

Define your edges.

Don't:

Get so attached to your design that you can't make changes if you discover a better solution, or encounter unforeseen problems.

Sensory

Pay attention to non-visual senses, especially noises and scents

Don't - create water features that, though lovely, are too loud or will require extensive upkeep.

Plants

Group, don't dot - connect your islands

Use plants that will scent their surroundings (to your liking) - Witch Hazel, Peonies, Bearded iris, Lavender, herbs, Boxwood, Lilies

Consider plants native to the Southern Appalachians

Don't:

Plant beneath roof lines or under decks.

Try to grow lawn where it is not happy.

Use invasive plants. Period. There are always alternatives.

Installation

Mark ALL of your utilities before installation. Call 811 - CallBefore You Dig.

Stake or otherwise mark the entire design outlines- gardens, paths, steps, patio, walls.

Lay conduit under hardscape for future lighting or irrigation.

Expect the team leader of your installation crew to know and supervise planting requirements for all kinds of plants, from balled and burlaped trees to landscape plugs.

Try to incorporate moved soil, stone, and wood chips on site.

Don't:

Use landscape fabric

Minimize heavy machinery on site to avoid soil compaction. Use wood chips, plywood, anything to better distribute the weight of heavy machinery.

Plan for problems

Bear, deer snakes

Dogs

Slopes and erosion

Weeds/invasives