Principles of Landscape Design

Good Landscape Design Should Be…

Design…Do we need it?

- Yes!
- Well designed and properly installed landscape can:
  - Increase your property value by 17%!
- Poorly conceived and executed landscape can:
  - Decrease property value
  - Waste time and money
  - Possibly present a liability risk
The Reality Principles

Rule #1 – Functionality
- Who will use it?
- How will they use it?
- How do you want them to use it?
- Accessible for maintenance?
- Functional and maintainable over time?

Functional
- Allows for easy movement
- Accessible for maintenance recreation, leisure
- Functional and maintainable over entire life.
Easy to Maintain

- Reduces need for:
  - Fertilizers
  - Pesticides
  - Equipment (mowers)
  - Water
  - Extra labor/expense

Environmentally Sound

- “Right plant right place” decreases:
  - Disease
  - Insect stress
  - Water needs
- Plants in stress – more maintenance.
- Stressed plants require more:
  - Labor
  - Fertilizer
  - Pesticides
  - Ultimately more $$$.

Cost Effective

- Cost should not dictate whether the landscape is:
  - Functional
  - Maintainable
  - Environmentally sound
- Low cost can meet all these needs
- Take your time – let it grow
Visually Pleasing

Framework needed to create a visually pleasing landscape includes:
- **Functionality**, form follows function
- **Maintainability**, right plant, right place
- Consider the Cost
- Learn to understand
  - Enhance the positives – down-play the negatives

Fundamentally, good landscape design is a matter of “managing the viewer’s eye.”
The Artistic Principles

The artistic principles help us achieve a visually pleasing landscape

Principles of Design

Universal design principles guide and enhance our creativity
Principles of Design

- Six Main Principles
  - Unity
  - Simplicity
  - Variety
  - Balance
  - Proportion
  - Sequence
- How to apply to the landscape
  - Using several design elements

Unity: The overriding principle

- Landscape elements should tie together
- Should provides good blend of simplicity and variety
- Features can still be treated differently to match the theme
  - Natural shapes for differing materials — or single color, many hues
  - Brick patio pavers plus a brick post or wall
  - Topography can be used for unity
    - Berms, hills = unity. Create a union of parts

Unity: Tying the Landscape Together

Repeat these to unify the landscape:
- Color
- Curvy lines
- Straight lines
- Construction materials
- Textures
- Use similar backgrounds and foregrounds to establish connections.
- Same color/different plant
- Focal points establish dominance and unify group
Repetition strengthens Unity:
Selected plant material should be repeated throughout landscape

Connections strengthen Unity: Interconnected parts allow the eye to move smoothly from one element to another appreciating the whole picture. Line

Dominance
- Focal points establish dominance to unify a variety of materials
- Can draw attention to or away from something
Unity of Three Law: Whenever three elements of the same kind are grouped together there is a strong sense of unity.

Lines Affect Perception
Simplicity: Limiting Change

Achieved by repetition of ideas or materials.

- One of most common errors in landscapes is trying to do “too much.”
- Less can be more. Too much variety in plant material becomes chaotic
- Reduce the number of themes
- Viewer should experience the landscape in parts as well as a whole
- Too much simplicity = Monotony

- Monotypic, simple planting = Monotony

- Simple but still monotonous
Variety = Absence of Monotony
Gotta have it!
- Variety allows for a prominent element.
- Engages viewer with what’s going on.
  - Important to have something unexpected.
- Variety adds spice and interest…..
- but, too much variety = Confusion
- Delicate relationship between Variety and Simplicity

- Too much variety causes visual confusion
- Variety and Simplicity work in a delicate balance
- Are you a collector? Be honest, now….
Too little variety causes monotony

Careful use of variety allows emphasis to be placed where desired. Imagine this near a front door.
Time for a break?

Balance: Symmetrical

- **Formal**, static, classical design
- The same thing on each side of a central axis, bilateral symmetry
- Distribution of visual weight - equal
Symmetrical - Problems

- Symmetry can be boring
- Plant loss on one side loses balance
- A symmetrical house may not allow asymmetrical landscape

Symmetrical - Effective
**Balance: Asymmetrical**

- Casual
- Indicates movement
- Achieved by using similar ideas but different things on either side
- Distribution of visual weight - equal

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**Asymmetrical - Problems**

- Empty areas that make your eye uneasy
- Bottom left side feels heavy
- Top right feels light
- Floating, not grounded
Asymmetrical - Effective

- Eye feels a sense of unity
- No uneasiness
- Calmness
- Feel grounded and enclosed
Proportion, or Scale

How things relate to each other with respect to size

- Large elements and small elements need an intermediary to bring them together
- Large difference in size creates dissonance
- Very large material can be intimidating
- Generally don't want very large in residential design.
- Make people feel welcome
- Bring things down to human scale

Disproportionate or proportionate?

Proportionate or disproportionate?
**Sequence, or Rhythm**

- From horizontal to rounded to vertical
- From low spreading plants to vertical plants.
- Here to there.
- Near to far.
- Turf-shrubs-trees.
- Sequence can help the eye move from one area to another – orderly progression.

- **Sequence** (rhythm) can be achieved through the graduation in size and type of plants used.
Time for a break?
**Principles of Design**

- **Six Main Principles**
  - Unity
  - Simplicity
  - Variety
  - Balance
  - Proportion
  - Sequence
- **How to apply to the landscape**

**Plants are Functional**

- What is the function of that space?
- What plants can serve the needs of that space?
- Each plant serves a purpose, or function

**Specimen Plant as Focal Point**

- Perfect form or shape
Accent Plants Draw Attention

Corner Plants

Foundation Plants

- Used to soften sharp edge
- Used to soften the horizontal line or mark a boundary
Border Plants
To create a visual boundary or background

Screen Plants
To hide or screen a view

Shade Plants
Pure function in the south – can you think of others?
Ornamental Elements from Plants

- Each plant has its own traits, characteristics, or artistic elements
- Their placement adds another layer to the design
- These elements create the design

Using Color, Form, Texture & Line

Let nature guide you
Putting it All Together

The Design Process

- Base/Site Plan
  - Start with a Base
  - Add the Site analysis
- Conceptual diagram
  - General use areas
- Plant selection
- Final design
- Planting plan
- A GUIDE

The base plan should consist of:
- Accurate house placement – legal document
- Accurate lot and house dimensions
- Existing hardscapes
- Any covenants?

How to begin?
- Obtain plot/plat from: builder, or county or city property records
- Determine the scale & decide a scale
I. Base Plan

Stick to the Facts:

- Obtain a survey
  - Plat from the office of probate, courthouse.
  - Working copy for dimensions, scale not needed
  - Provides a base copy for the design process

- Make preliminary decisions
  - How much can you spend?
  - How much are you willing to spend?

Site analysis on Base Plan

- Evaluate the components of the site
  - Site physical characteristics
    - Exposure: macro and micro climates
    - Soil: pH, type, drainage, hardpans, etc.
    - Topography
  - Site aesthetic characteristics
    - Views: attractive and unattractive
    - Indoor/outdoor relationships including utility and views
Adding the Site conditions

Existing Site Conditions

Site condition – hours of sun

Map the sun's path in summer. Estimate the number of hours you will be able to see the sun.
Site conditions -
Exposure: Sun Wind Noise

Base Plan + Site Plan?

Time for a break?
II. Conceptual Diagram

*Form follows function*

Outdoor needs:
- **Recreation**
  - Kids, pets, entertainment
- **Storage**
  - Toys in the yard, lawn equipment, boat
- **Circulation**
  - Parking to kitchen, outdoor cooking to indoor

Aesthetic preferences:
- **Plant material**
- **Construction material**
  - Stone, concrete, wood
  - Garden style (formal/informal)
  - Special elements: statuary, water features

Conceptual Diagram

Includes Base/Site Plan of property:
- House
- Walks/drive
- Terraces
- Utilities
- Trees
- Shrubs
- Outbuildings

Plus …

- Desired usefulness in specific areas
- What are your needs and preferences?

- Three general use areas:
  - Public
  - Private
  - Service
The Concept Plan adds creative ideas:

- Defines spaces – address functional areas with general plant material
- Evolves from shapes developed in the site analysis/base plan
- Refine and experiment with different concepts or materials
- Remember: form follows function
III. The Design

- **Planting Plan**
  - communicates exactly what to use, where it will go, how it should look.
  - Drawn to scale
  - Labels plants and other components – key/legend
  - Provides a materials list
  - Provides additional notes

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**Conceptual Plan?**

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**Final Plan**
The Final Design includes

- Plant list
- Plant inventory
- Illustrations of structures & plants
- A complete picture explaining installation of the landscape

Harmony exists in the landscape when all 6 design principles work together.

Before
After All That Said

Remember Two Things

All That Said

Remember Two Things

Create Something You Like
Start Small

Questions?