

Landscape Renovation Guide

The total combination of yard, garden, and outdoor living space is your landscape. In this survey we use the terms landscape or yard and garden interchangeably. Your answers to the following questions are the first step in creating the yard and garden you want. You can fill the blanks in on your computer, or print out the pdf form and write longhand.

We have provided printable grids, questionnaires, and a page for capturing photos of your yard to help plan the project.

Part I: You and Your Landscape

1. Do you consider yourself a gardener?
2. How much time and energy do you now devote to your yard?
3. Do you want to reduce, increase, or maintain this investment of time and why?
4. Do you garden as a hobby and for recreation?
5. How important is low maintenance to you?
6. Do you want to maintain your own yard, use professional landscape services, or a combination of both?
7. How important is “high image,” a showcase landscape and garden?
8. List the members of your household who currently are involved in gardening for your home.

Part II: How You Use Your Yard and Garden

1. Describe your existing yard and garden in detail, referring to front yard, back yard, side yard, patio, vegetable garden, etc.
2. Estimate the amount of time you spend in activities in your yard, exclusive of gardening or maintenance chores.
3. Do you currently have a swimming pool or plans to install one?
4. Do you currently have a pond or water feature or plans to install one?
5. Do you have youngsters who use the yard as a play area? Is play equipment installed or planned for the future?
6. Do you use your yard for sports activities such as baseball, basketball, etc?
7. Do you store recreational vehicle such as boats, campers, trailers, etc., on your property?
8. Do you raise vegetables?
9. Do you have pets? Specify what. Do the pets live in the yard? Do the pets have pens or cages?
10. Is your yard fenced at present or do you plan to add a fence in the future?
11. Do you presently have a patio or deck or plan to build one in the future?
12. Do you enjoy entertaining outdoors, is your yard your outside living room?
13. Do you want a garden sanctuary, a quiet retreat for reading or meditating?
14. What impression do you want people to have of your home when they see it from the street?
15. Will visitors to the garden have special needs such as mobility impairment or sight impairment?
16. Do you want a specialty garden for pursuing a hobby such as bird or butterfly watching?

Part III: How Does Your Garden Grow?

1. Where are the sunny parts of your yard? The shady parts?
2. What are the sun/shade patterns at different times of the day?
3. Does your yard have a wind pattern? Describe.
4. What type of soil do you have?
5. Make a list of your existing plants, trees, and shrubs, indicating size and general location. (e.g. 30' Maple along driveway).
6. What is your favorite season of the year?
7. What are your favorite evergreen plants and trees?
8. What are your favorite flowers and flowering plants?
9. What are your favorite colors?
10. Do you have a drainage problem in your yard?
11. Are you concerned about how your landscape will affect your immediate environment and the environment of your community?

Part IV

Budgeting

Investment in landscaping is one home investment that is recouped at the sale of the home, according to Money magazine. You get to enjoy the landscape, and then get your money back when you sell. Budget on a long and short-term basis. Landscapes don't have to be installed all at one time.

1. Will you be paying for the landscape from available cash?
2. Will you be borrowing money for the landscape and if so, from what sources do you have money available?
3. Do you need assistance in finding funding for the projects?
4. Are you going to do the project all at once, or incrementally as you can pay for it?
5. How much do you feel comfortable spending on your landscape?

Taking Photos

Walk your property and photograph it from as many different views as possible. Be sure to snap pictures of your house and any other outbuildings, storage sheds, play areas, and recreational equipment. Take pictures of existing large (specimen) trees and plants, flower and vegetable gardens, patio areas, fences, and pet housing and exercise areas. All very sunny or shady portions of the yard should be shown, if possible. When you're finished attach the photos to the evaluation form and make it part of your notebook. If you are using digital photos, you can place them in the form or use digital photo album software.

Using the Grid

The foundation for a well-designed yard and a beautiful garden is the plan. This drawing is called a Base Plan. It gives a two-dimensional overview of the space. The grid provided is designed so that one inch equals ten feet. Measure your property and draw the boundaries and the outline of your house on the Base Plan. Draw in the driveway, paths, existing trees shrubs, and flower beds. Indicate the direction North and any other pertinent information such as an unsightly view to be hidden, location of a septic tank, a special window wanting a view, prevailing wind direction, play and recreational

equipment, etc. Fasten or copy as many sheets together as needed to complete this activity. When the Base Plan is complete, take the plan, plus your answers to the questions on Parts I-III to your nursery or landscape professional and you are ready to start renovating your landscape.

Selecting your landscape partners

If you are a do-it-yourselfer, you may want the services of a designer or contractor for major work, and a relationship with a retail nursery or garden center for purchasing your plants and equipment. Many nurseries have designers on staff to assist in your planning. For a list of retail nurseries in your area visit the Landscape Texas find a vendor section.

There are several types of professionals available to help you at each stage of your project. Ensure your success by doing business with a qualified professional

Retail Nursery & Garden Center

Texas Certified Nursery Professional (TCNP)

Retail nursery employees, managers, and owners take for a self study course consisting of 4 parts: Plant Culture, Plant Identification, Merchandising, and Landscape Design.

Certification requires continuing education

Texas Master Certified Nursery Professional (TMCNP)

Individuals who have earned the TCNP designation and want to take the next step in professionalism attend the TMCNP program consisting of a 4-day study course taught by professional instructors and industry professionals, followed by an exam. This course offers advanced training at Texas A&M University using TAMU facilities and laboratories. Certification requires continuing education.

Find a retail nursery in your area that employs certified professionals by visiting the Find a Vendor section of this web site.

Design assistance is available from a landscape designer or a landscape architect.

A landscape architect is licensed by the state after university graduate work and a qualifying exam administered by the state. A landscape architect will produce a blueprint and may work with landscape contractors to complete a project.

A landscape designer specializes in designing outdoor spaces, but is not a landscape architect.

A landscape contractor is qualified to read a blueprint. The contractor can lay drainage pipes, use earth-moving equipment, and supervise stonemasons and carpenters. Some landscape contractors employ landscape architects in their design departments.

Texas Certified Landscape Professional

This is a peer-reviewed certification administered by the Texas Nursery & Landscape association. Landscape contractor supervisors, owners, and managers take for this self-study course followed by an exam covering 20 topics including management, landscape and irrigation design, resource efficiency, building materials, botany, turf, and pruning.

Continuing education is required for this certification. To find a Texas Certified Landscape Professional in your area visit the Find a Vendor area of this website.

Once you have identified several potential landscape partners interview them and make your decision based on more than just price. Be sure the individual you hire is qualified to do the work you need and is properly licensed by the municipality and state of Texas. Irrigation contractors are required to be licensed by the state of Texas. To verify the qualification of a contractor, visit the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality web site