

Outdoor Living

Although we don't do a lot of residential design, they are one of our favorite types. Creativity can be pushed to the limits, tested and redefined as the design is conceived and developed. We get asked quite frequently by friends, neighbors and acquaintances for thoughts and ideas that they could use in their own landscapes. I thought it would be fun to give a few useful tips you can use to develop your home landscape plan.

You first need to know what you want. Write down your "wish list" for your yard. Don't be shy, dare to dream. Cut pictures out of magazines or take photos of landscapes you see. Be specific, get into the details. This will help you realize what you really like and how your yard should look. Remember that you are the one living there and that you will be the one looking at and using your landscape the most.



Don't forget the "non-living" elements. These can be some of the most striking focal features of a yard. Think of creative ways to use products like concrete, rock, stone, rebar, metal, pottery, fabric, glass, even wood. The list goes on and on. These hardscape elements can be used for walking surfaces, sculpture, screening and privacy walls, retaining of slopes, creating spaces or outdoor rooms, and providing variety, color and texture to your landscape. A simple wall painted a bold color can really make an impact. These elements can help in creating depth by layering them with plant material and other features.



Take time to really get to know the plant material you select. There is nothing worse than having to remove a plant that has grown too large for a space or has grown to block a prime view. Visit nurseries, research plant growth characteristics and look at older mature landscapes to see how the plants have grown and how they affect the space. Remember that plant material is a living, growing and dynamic organism that is in a constant state of change.



As a final note, remember that there is no such thing as a "maintenance free" landscape. Plan your landscape to fit the amount of time you have committed for upkeep of your property. Even the best planned and installed landscape is an eyesore if not properly maintained. Good planning and proper installation by not cutting corners will decrease the maintenance required to keep your landscape looking like the spot of paradise you envisioned in the beginning.

Have fun with your landscape space whether it is a large custom lot, a postage stamp back yard, your apartment balcony or just a kitchen window. Plant a tree, a shrub or a tomato plant. Plants are therapeutic and will bring a smile to your face.

"Deep summer is when laziness finds respectability" - Sam Keen

FAVORITE FLORA: CAMPSIS RADICANS - TRUMPET CREEPER VINE

Are you one of the many who are afraid of pruning your plants in fear of killing them? Maybe you just want a hardy flowering vine? The Trumpet Creeper Vine (*Campsis radicans*) might be the plant for you. This tough, woody vine is right at home in the Las Vegas Valley. It is a native of the Southeastern United States but enjoys our warm summers out west. The Trumpet Creeper Vine is fast growing with dark green foliage and trumpet shaped flowers. These hummingbird attracting flowers appear in summer and can last through the fall. Depending on the variety, flower colors can range from brick red to orange to even yellow. Trumpet Creeper vines can grow quite large if left alone, easily reaching 30 feet. Don't worry about pruning this vine back too much. Cut it back hard in late winter or early spring, you can even cut it to the ground if the stems become too woody or large.



Try this plant in a tropical or oasis setting, up against a warm west wall. This vine will climb brick, stucco and wood, sometimes aggressively. Trumpet Creeper Vine can add some color and interest to the post of a trellis or unsightly fence. Top heavy growth may require the vine to be tied to a sturdy support.

Photo of the Month



Porcupine Rim Trail View
Castle Valley, Moab, Utah
Caroline Hicks