

Planning Your Home Landscape I

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LANDSCAPE DESIGN IS WORTH THE EFFORT

Putting a landscape plan on paper is the most efficient way to design or remodel the arrangement of your home grounds. This folder outlines a step-by-step process to help you map your property, list your needs and desires for use of outdoor space, and prepare an overall plan to guide you in orderly development. Details of selecting landscape materials—either for constructing necessary walls, fences, hard surfaces, and other architectural features, or for choosing suitable plants—can be left until you are ready to make final drawings of each area of your design.

If you prefer to hire a professional landscape architect or commercial nursery firm to prepare plans for you, this folder will help you organize your own ideas. A clear understanding between you and the designer is vital if you want a landscape plan that fits your property and the way you expect to use your outdoor space.

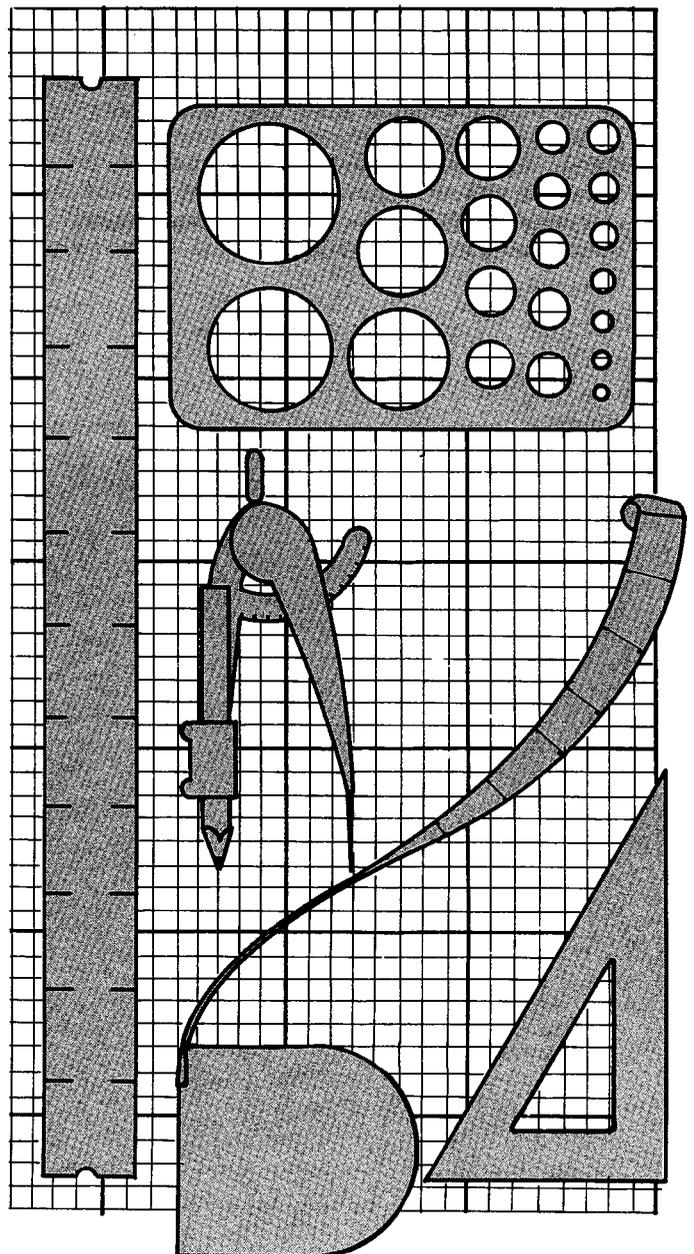
Successful landscape developments must combine building and site with the activities of the people who live there. Some homeowners expect the space around their houses to be an opportunity for recreation—gardening, entertaining, enjoying their own out-of-doors as much as possible. Others want attractive and convenient home grounds suitable to their neighborhoods but plan to pursue other interests in their leisure time. Landscape designs for such different households should be quite different.

Gather Your Tools

Homeowners who draw their own plans can use familiar tools and equipment with a few new items available from an office supply or stationery store. To prepare a base map, several trial plans, and a finished drawing, the following items will be useful:

- Outdoor measuring tape, 50 to 100 feet long.
- Note pad and pencil for recording measurements.
- Graph paper (eight squares to the inch is most convenient).
- Masking tape for fastening tissue paper over map.
- 12 inch ruler for measuring and using as a straight edge in drawing.
- Tissue paper thin enough to see through. Some art stores sell professional tracing paper.
- Soft pencils and erasers.

tools for the job



A plastic template with measured circles is convenient for drawing plants at accurate spacings. At a scale of eight feet to an inch, a 1/4 inch circle can indicate a peony or other two foot plant. A dwarf yew can be correctly spaced using a 1/2 inch circle to show four feet. A one inch circle equaling eight feet in the landscape could represent a large shrub such as a French lilac.

Measuring tapes sold in hardware stores are helpful in recording property lines and other long distances, but people skilled at pacing often can accurately map without a tape. If you have house plans or a plot plan drawn to scale, you can save time by transferring those measurements to your landscape scale drawing.

Map Your Property

A map you prepare for your own use need not be as precise as a surveyor's, but you should locate everything on your property that is not to be removed as accurately as you can. You need a base map that includes these features:

- Property lines, including any easements or rights-of-way.
- House, showing windows, doors, steps, walks, decks, patios, or porches.
- Garage, sheds, or any other buildings.
- Driveways, with connection to street or road.
- Utility poles, wires, underground pipes, sewers, septic tanks, drain fields, oil or gas tanks.

- Fences, enclosures, pens.
- Natural landscape features such as rocks, water, or significant changes in ground level.
- Views of neighboring properties or buildings, desirable or undesirable.
- North point, direction of prevailing winds, and path of sun across property.
- All existing trees and shrubs to remain, including spread or size of crown, as well as location of base or trunk.
- Any other existing landscape feature to remain.

From measurements recorded in your notebook, you can prepare your base map on graph paper. Map as neatly as you can, and identify with lettering anything that looks confusing to you. When you draw the house outlines, initial the location of main rooms (K for kitchen, etc.). It is not necessary to draw interior walls.

List Your Needs and Desires

An accurate map is the first step, but it is equally important to prepare a detailed list of things you want your home landscape to provide. This will take careful thought. You should include things you consider necessities and those you would like to have, either now or in the future. For example, perhaps a lily pool could replace a sand box five years from now.

Here are some items your list will probably include:

- Safe, convenient driveway and parking space.
- Safe, convenient walks and steps.
- Outdoor storage for vehicles, machinery, equipment, and wood stacks, perhaps protected or concealed.
- Outdoor work space for necessary activities.
- Pens or enclosures for pets.
- Energy saving plantings or earth construction to admit sunlight and warmth in winter, provide shade and cooling in summer, and direct wind currents or breezes.
- Drainage and erosion control.
- Screening for privacy or noise reduction.
- Protection from trespassers, human or animal.
- Active play space adapted to ages and interests of family members.
- Passive recreation spaces, including outdoor sitting and eating areas.
- Pleasing views from windows and outdoor sitting spaces.
- Landscape use of architectural materials and plants to blend house and other construction into the site.
- Intensive flower, fruit, or vegetable growing.

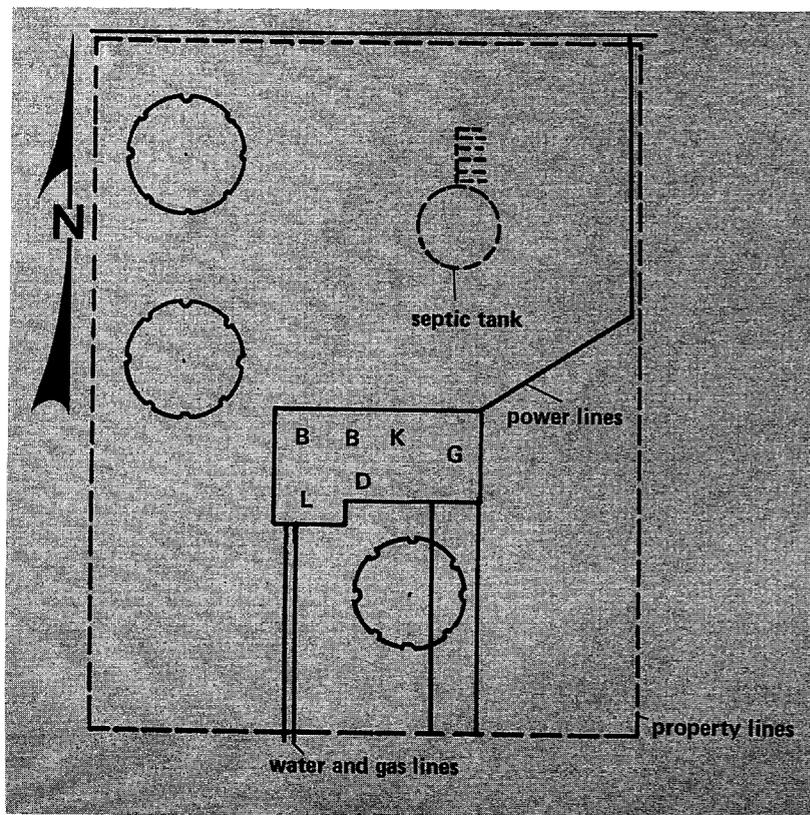
From these possibilities and perhaps others, you can select those that will make your property a three-dimensional space for use. It should be suited as precisely as possible to the way you and your family live and to the kind of house and buildings on your lot.

Make Trial Drawings

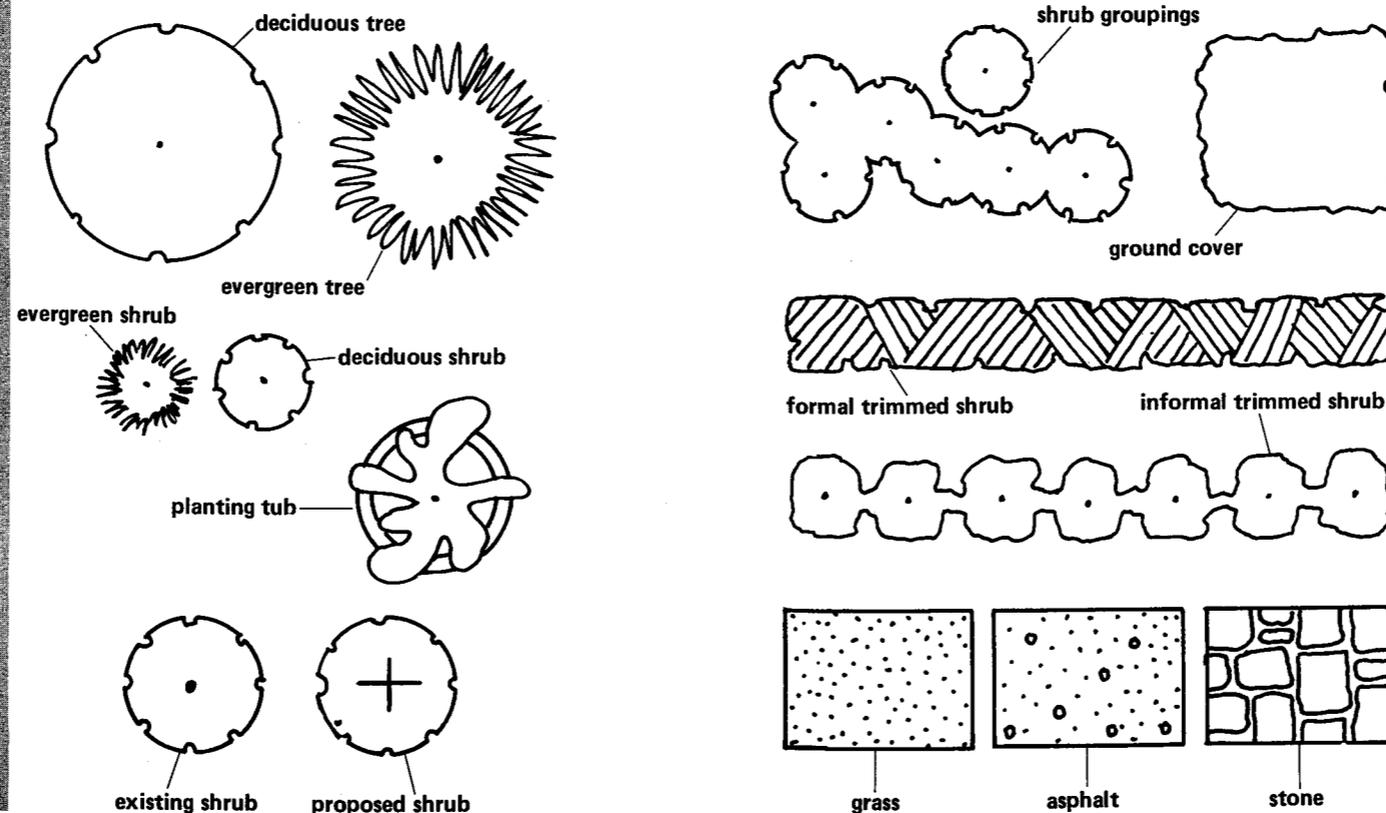
With an accurate base map and a detailed list of needs and desires, you are ready to begin trial drawings. You will need a generous supply of tissue paper. Tape or tack a sheet of the transparent paper over your map and experiment with sketching areas for outdoor use. Try to find sufficient space for each need. Most designers sketch several arrangements, saving all their drawings, until they are satisfied with a solution. Three kinds of uses are often conveniently grouped. First, space must be identified for the entrance or public area of your property—the land between your house and the street or road. Next, room for outdoor work space will be needed, sometimes screened or concealed from sitting or eating places. Third, outdoor living space for whatever use your family intends should be indicated.

Outdoor spaces must be connected: mark circulation patterns with driveways, walks, gates, or any other passageways you will need. It is extremely inconvenient to find parts of your property blocked from necessary service vehicles or lawn and garden equipment. If you have children who visit back and forth with neighborhood playmates, you may need a convenient opening in a fence or hedge to avoid a busy public street. Make as many trial drawings on tissue paper as it takes to find a place for every use you can reasonably accommodate. You may find that there is not room for a tennis court or for a pontoon boat on blocks all winter.

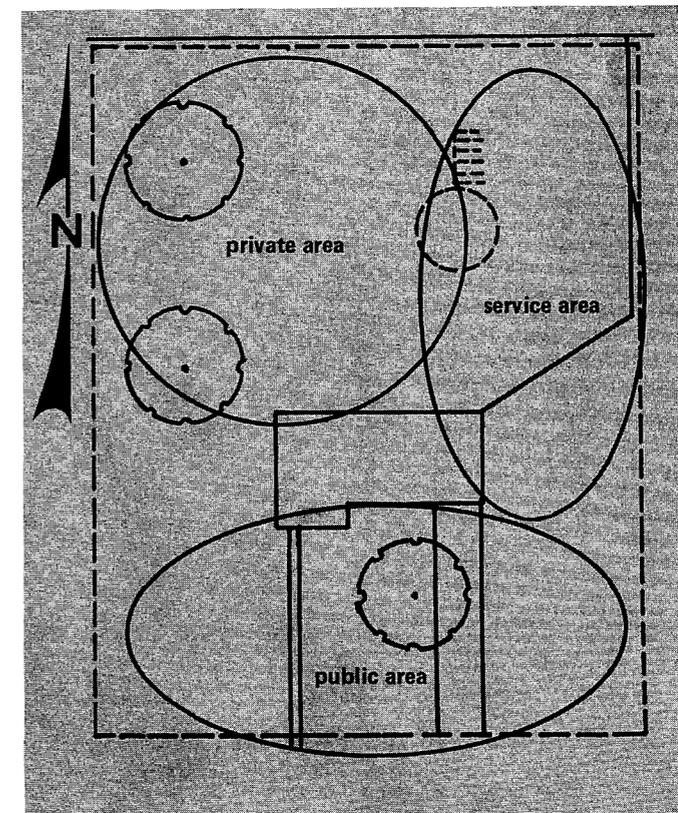
base map



symbols for plantings and landscape features



trial drawing



Generate Final Plan

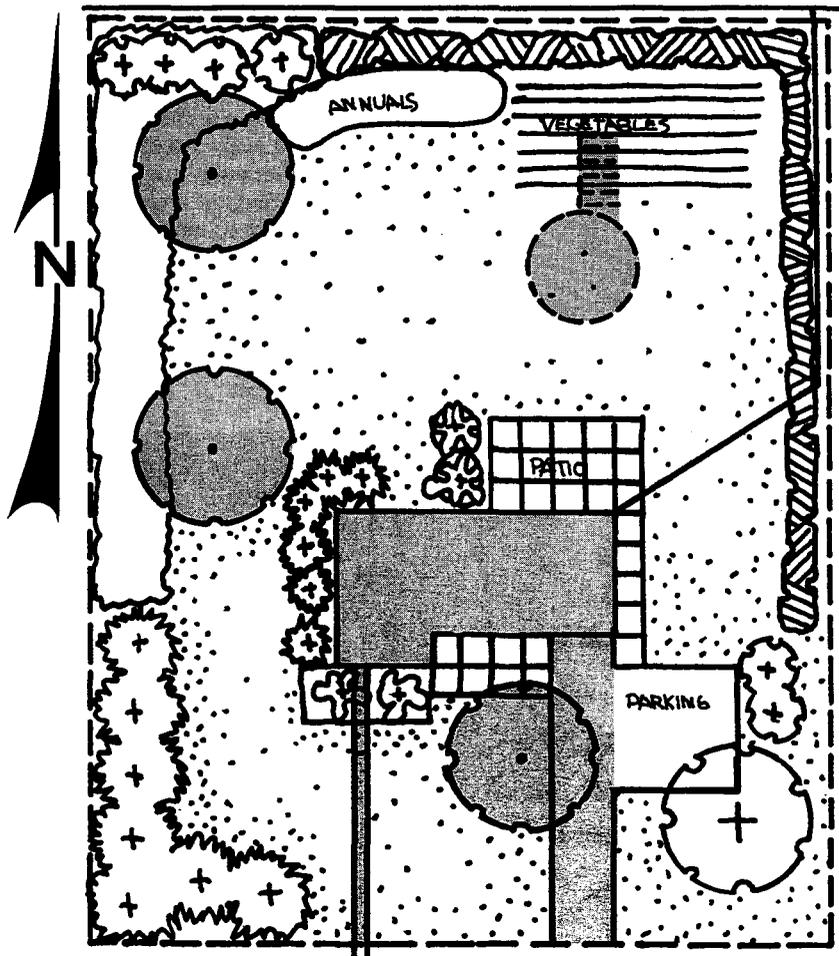
When you have completed a scheme for use of your landscape, you can decide where planting or construction will be needed to develop your plan. Selection of materials for such development can proceed as you make detailed drawings for each area. Drawing trees, shrubs, and other plants, as well as symbols for fences, patios, decks, or other construction, should also be attempted first on tissue paper overlays.

Your final landscape plan can be transferred to your graph paper map. Most homeowners find the landscape plan on well-

marked graph paper convenient for counting off measurements and checking plant spacing.

Whether you complete a landscape plan for yourself or have one prepared for you by a designer, you may expect to make adjustments or changes as development continues. A logical plan will help you avoid costly mistakes and consider alternatives before you transplant trees or relocate inconvenient construction.

the final landscape plan



*Anne M. Hanchek, extension horticulturist, revised this publication. Jane P. McKinnon is retired.

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