

## The Value of Landscaping

From a monetary standpoint, a nicely landscaped property can increase the value of your home by 15%, allowing you to recoup 100–200% of your investment at selling time. This compares with the investment recovery rates for kitchen remodeling (75–125%), bathroom remodeling (20–120%), swimming pool additions (20–50%). A monetary return is not the only value of landscaping. Below are some very important values of landscaping.

### Plants protect water

**quality.** Proper landscaping reduces nitrate leaching from the soil into the water supply. Plants also reduce surface water runoff, keeping phosphorus and other pollutants out of our waterways and preventing septic system overload.

### Proper landscaping reduces soil erosion.

A dense cover of plants and mulch holds soil in place, keeping sediment out of lakes, streams, stormdrains and off of roads.

### Plants improve air quality.

One tree can remove

26 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually, equaling 11,000 miles of car emissions. Landscape plants, including shrubs and turf, remove smoke, dust and other pollutants from the air. One study showed that one acre of trees has the ability to remove 13 tons of particles and gases annually.

### Landscaping lowers summer air temperatures.

According to the EPA, urban forests reduce urban air temperatures significantly by shading heat sinks such as

buildings and concrete and returning humidity to the air through evaporative cooling. Trees shading homes can reduce attic temperatures as much as 40 degrees F.

### Landscaping conserves natural resources.

Properly placed deciduous trees reduce house temperatures in the summer, allowing air conditioning units to run 2 to 4 percent more efficiently, but allow the sun to warm the house in the winter. Homes sheltered by evergreen windbreaks can reduce winter

heat loss and are generally warmer than homes without such protection. By using trees to modify temperatures and protect against wind, the amount of fossil fuels used for cooling and heating is reduced.

### Landscaping screens busy streets.

Well-placed plantings offer privacy and tranquility by screening out busy street noises and reducing glare from headlights.

So, what is the value of landscaping—much more than first imagined.



## Landscaping The Public View

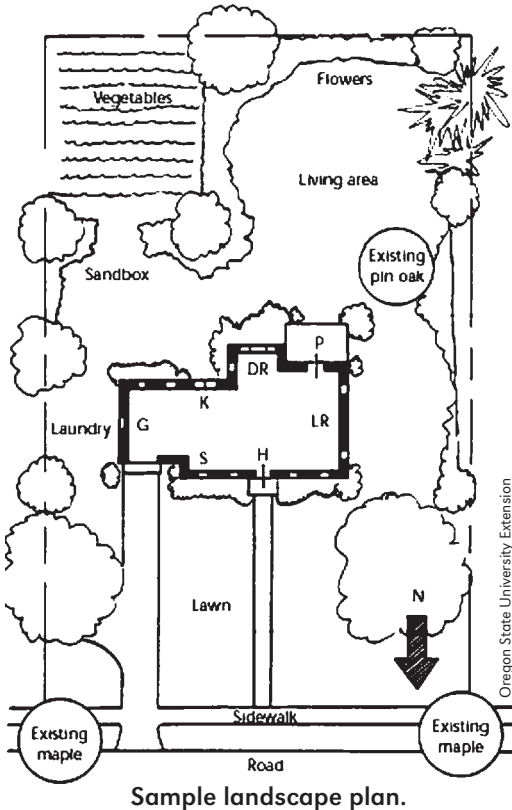
Winter brings a slower pace to gardening. Now is a good time to think about the home landscape and how it can be improved. An attractive front yard can enhance the appearance of your house and neighborhood. The expanse of lawn and surrounding plants creates the most pleasing picture if designed or planned rather than allowed to take shape on its own.

How you plant the front yard depends mainly on your house. On most homesites, the house is the prominent feature. All plants, driveways, fences and other items are meant to complement it. Shrubs and trees unite the house with its surroundings by softening vertical lines and making the building seem a natural part of the terrain.

The two major landscape design areas around your house are at the corners and doorway, as both have harsh vertical lines. Your front door is the house's focal point and short plantings on either side of it are appropriate. Taller plants are suitable for corners, where they will funnel the viewer's eye toward your doorway plants and front door. Houses that are too tall, appear shorter if the corner plantings extend like wings on each side, with the tallest plants at or near the corners.

Trees frame the house, focusing interest on it as the main feature of your property. Plant trees whose mature size is in scale with the house, or low houses will look dwarfed and tall houses will appear even taller than they actually are.

Select trees to match the house design. Steeply-angled roof lines and dormer windows call for pyramidal trees such as spruce and birch. Trees with rounded or horizontal form, linden, crabapple and Bradford pear, are better companions for the low lines of a ranch type dwelling.



Low shrubs and ground covers along house walls provide a smooth transition from building to lawn. Shrubs along the front wall reduces the apparent height of a tall building. Having open spaces with natural mulches and ground covers in the planting, can make low-built houses appear more massive.

The simpler a planting near the house, the better. Use only a few kinds of shrubs, but plan for some variety in size, form and texture. Consider adding areas for flowers or ornamental grasses, but keep these at a minimum height. Select shrubs whose natural height and

growth pattern fit the desired space to reduce pruning labor. Avoid pruning shrubs into unnatural shapes as they are difficult to maintain and don't always enhance the landscape.

An open lawn area can provide an impressive setting for a house. A front lawn uncluttered by specimen shrubs, flower beds and garden ornaments can make your property seem spacious. Shrubs will appear lost and floating unless planted in groups or cultivated beds.

Flowers are most appreciated where you spend time relaxing outdoors, usually the backyard for modern homes, the front yard for older homes. Lay out beds with a combination of straight lines and bold, sweeping curves. Numerous small, wiggly curves have low-visual impact.

Make a big splash with flowers using large masses of single colors. Plant a group of 50 'Red Emperor' tulips next to a bed of 50 white 'Mount Hood' daffodils, rather than a checkerboard mixture of various colors.

Home landscapes, like clothing, go in and out of style. After years of growth, many yards are ready for landscape renewal and improvement. Analyze yours and proceed with a plan.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Oregon State University Extension EC 1533, "Basic Design Concepts for Sustainable Landscapes" online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/html/ec/ec1533>



Lack of simplicity (left) and simplicity (right). Although there are more elements in the landscape on the right, they are grouped to create a simpler design.

## Cut Your Utility Bills By Up to 30 Percent With Landscaping

Landscaping can change the microclimate around a building by 20–25 degrees F. According to the US Department of Energy, energy-efficient landscaping can save up to 30% on home heating bills. Savings for cooling can be even more. Most people can save at least a few hundred dollars a year by properly reworking their yard. This can also increase the value of your home since buyers will pay more for a house with low utility bills. There are a number of things to consider including sunlight, water, soil and color of your house.

**Sunlight**—Plants interact with solar radiation by creating shade and absorbing heat. In temperate climates, deciduous plants in full leaf are generally the best interceptors of direct solar radiation. And, in the winter, when their leaves have been shed, they allow in much desired sunshine. Landscaping should block or filter summer sun and permit winter sun to reach most living areas. Dense trees can block up to 95% of sunlight and 75% of its heat. Consider the size and shape of the shadow a plant will cast. At midday, a vine-covered wall is cooler than a bare wall. If you don't have mature trees, consider planting vines on a trellis.

**Water**—Water also tempers heat. Even a small pond can help. Plants can also alter microclimates by intercepting precipitation. Only 60% of rain falling on a pine forest reaches the ground. Because trees intercept and slow down water movement, they also help to control runoff and erosion. Plant water-thrifty plants, often natives, suited to the climate. Group together plants with similar water needs. During droughts, raise the cutting level of your lawnmower to between 2 and 3 inches. This causes less stress and encourages deep root growth.

**Soil**—Berms, small manmade mounds of earth, can block sun, obstruct winds, insulate and control noise. Mounding soil against a wall can provide insulation, however, the soil must be well-drained. Sandy soil drains too quickly and doesn't provide much in the way of nutrients. Water tends to run off of clay soil. The best soil is a mix of clay, sand and silt (loam).

**Color**—Paved blacktop can raise temperatures 20 degrees F over adjacent grassed areas. House color also influences temperatures. White roofs keep houses cooler in summer.