

Excerpts from several chapters of **The Owner-Built Landscape**

Line and Form



Many of the fundamental landscape design principles are common to other forms of creative expression - painting, sculpture, music...the art of landscape design seeks to create a functional, unified and aesthetically pleasing outdoor environment. Other creative elements employed in landscape design include color, texture, scale, symmetry, proportion, rhythm and repetition; all are dependent on each other and must be considered together to produce a unified design. **Unlike most art forms, seasonal and long term changes in form, color and other elements must be considered.**

Line is created in the landscape by existing patterns of structures, hardscapes, planting beds and plant material. **Line influences how the eye moves through the landscape** - horizontally along walks and planting beds and vertically up and down plant forms and structures. Line is also created by individual plant shape (i.e. branches, leaves) and how various plant shapes are arranged.

Straight lines are perceived as formal and structural; curved lines are perceived as natural and relaxing. Straight lines will lead the eye more directly to a point than curved lines. Thus, line will influence the “mood” of the landscape and should be considered in relation to the overall intent or theme; **the vast majority of new landscapes utilize more curved lines** to offset the very structured elements of architecture - and the very structured quality of modern life!

Closely related to the concept of line is form, which may relate to an individual plant, or to the arrangement of plants in the landscape. Plants are classified as...

The Small Garden



Though restricted by size, the smaller garden can be just as satisfying and beautiful as larger expanses. **In fact, the level of intimacy, enclosure and privacy often surpasses that of the large, sprawling landscape.**

The same principles of garden design apply to both large and small gardens, though every inch of space is critical in the small garden; it's very important to start with a cohesive plan. The small garden can have any theme, from formal to oriental to English cottage.

Keep the design of a small garden simple; instead of a hodgepodge of plant material, use a few types of plants repeated in several areas. Also repeat the use of the same, or similar, materials for walks, walls and patio. These techniques not only increase the visual size of the area, but also add to the unity of the landscape.

Other techniques can be employed to make your garden feel larger; use shrubs to soften fences and walls - by "layering" smaller, lighter colored ...

From "Landscape Lighting":

Designing Your Lighting System

Before deciding what and how to light, we must first ask "why light?" Our design decisions are dependent on proposed uses for landscape lighting...for safety, security, property value, or enhancement of the beauty of the garden and structures. Most likely, the answer will be a combination of two or more of these uses. **A specific technique can be employed to satisfy more than one requirement**...for example, uplighting a prominent tree near the house entrance will provide safety, security and aesthetic enhancement.

Landscape lighting design is very similar to the design of the landscape itself: we must determine focal points, use areas, traffic patterns, outdoor "rooms," style, mood, etc. We need to consider how the proposed lighting will enhance the form, color and texture of the soft and hard landscape elements. **Lighting should serve to unify both interior and exterior design themes, conceal what may be unattractive and shape the view of the landscape at night.**

The design process should begin with a **site map**, drawn to scale, showing all landscape features and areas that need lighting. Fixtures and lamps are chosen for each area based on the desired effects ...path lights for safe passage along walks and stairs, wash fixtures for silhouette effects against a wall, etc.

One common mistake is to overlight; low levels of light create subtle beauty, and are often also sufficient for safety and security. Use brighter lighting effects for focal points, and consider the effects that different light intensities will have on the overall design. After deciding on the size and placement of lighting fixtures,...

Energy Efficiency



The proper placement of trees and shrubs around a home will have a significant impact on the energy required to heat and cool the structure. The few simple strategies outlined below will not only increase the property value of your home, but also decrease energy costs. Techniques will vary slightly from region to region, but with knowledge of local conditions and some common sense, the immediate environment can be maximized for energy efficiency.

Planting shade trees to the south of your home is one of the most obvious energy saving techniques; deciduous trees will block the hot summer sun, but allow the winter sun to reach the house. In some areas, planting a deciduous shade tree to the southwest or west may be desired. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that the proper placement of only three trees will save the average household between \$100 and \$250 in annual energy costs. Be sure to account for the mature size of the tree - a common mistake is to plant too close to the house....