



Nature's Dream  
*Landscape*

**THE ULTIMATE  
DESIGN AND PLANNING GUIDE**

For a New or Refreshed Landscape

Victoria Trucco / Ray Rueda

# The Ultimate Design and Planning Guide

*For a New or Refreshed Garden*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

0

Introduction

1

Assess your Existing Landscape

2

Establish a Garden Wish List

3

Consider How You Would Like to Use your Outdoor Space

4

Set a Budget and Consider Doing it by Phases

5

Refine Your Landscape Design Style

6

Get an Existing Site Plan

7

Learn the Basics About What Grows in Your Area



# 0. INTRODUCTION

So, you want to start a new garden or enhance your current one. Awesome. First take time to establish your needs, habits, style, taste, and budget for a smoother landscape project

Whether you are building a new home, getting a new pool, or just want to refresh the outdoor space -getting started on a landscape project can feel like a daunting task. Preparing yourself upfront will be valuable and save you time – even before you call professionals.

Considering your budget, how you would like to use the space, who is going to be on it, and what landscape styles appeal to you most (tropical, manicured, Zen, modern, Mediterranean, cottage, desert, etc.) can help keep a project on track and ensure that you are happy with the end result. As a first step, read this guide and take a critical look around your yard.



## 1. ASSESS YOUR EXISTING LANDSCAPE

What do you want to change? What do you want to keep? Distinguish the areas you'd like to reimagine, the ones you'd like to stay the same and anything that falls in between — spots that don't need to be entirely redone but that could benefit from small updates, such as changing the material of a path or replanting a bed beneath a mature tree.

What problem areas exist? If lack of privacy from neighbors is an issue, factoring in a combination of fencing and plants for screening may be one of your backyard priorities. Are there any site-specific challenges, such as an underutilized slope or a poorly draining corner? A professional will be able to tackle these situations and help set your budget accordingly.





## 2. ESTABLISH A GARDEN WISH LIST

Now we are getting to the fun part. If the sky were the limit, what would be in your dream garden? Would you have an outdoor lounge? Pool deck? Paver or rock walkways or driveway? Full-size pizza oven? Dreamy outdoor lighting? Change your driveway to fit more cars? Try not to get bogged down in the cost or feasibility of each element, but use this as a brainstorming exercise that may help reveal the different or coinciding dreams of the people involved in the project.

Once you've written everything down on your wish list, review it and identify which elements are top priorities, which ones are less important and any that aren't possible this time around. You can circle back to this list at any point in the project as you evaluate where to save and where it might be worth it to splurge.





### 3. CONSIDER HOW YOU WOULD LIKE TO USE YOUR OUTDOOR SPACE

As part of coming up with your garden wish list, or as a separate exercise, identify the activities you'd like to do in your new outdoor space. Do you want to use it for dining? Outside entertaining? If so, for how many people? Will you have small kids playing? Are there or will be any pets? Maybe you would like to create a lounge or a space for growing edible plants.

Identifying your outdoor-use priorities and the number of people you'd like to accommodate can help determine the size of a future deck or patio, for example. It also will help the designer better understand what to place where in the landscape.

Go a step further and think about when you'd use each area of the yard. If you're hoping to use a lounge during the evening, for example, you may want to plan for sources of light.



Also think about practicalities that you may have forgotten. Do you need storage for outdoor tools or sports equipment? Do you have a place to put garbage and recycling bins, and is it easy to roll them out and away from the street view?





Before

After



Shade Garden  
South Miami

#### 4. SET A BUDGET AND CONSIDER DOING IT BY PHASES

Establish how much you can afford to spend on your landscape project. The average landscape project cost ranges between \$5,000 - \$20,000. If you have enough funds set aside for the entire project, you can complete the design and installation at once. It is also possible to break up a project into smaller, more budget-friendly phases. You may also reduce your initial investment by planting younger plants, which are less expensive, at the right spacing and letting them grow.

**Tip:** If you do decide to phase the construction, it is best to first work with a professional on a complete master plan. He or she will be able to tell you what makes the most sense in terms of installation order and which projects can be bundled together.





## 5. REFINE YOUR LANDSCAPE DESIGN STYLE

Determining or refining your landscape design style is an important part of your project, so take your time with this step. Start by saving images of landscapes that appeal to you. Think about colors.

Cast a wide net during your initial inspiration-gathering phase, but then edit your images to feature one or two defining styles. Aim for styles that fit with your climate and site and your home's architecture. This will help set your project off on a clearer direction and result in a more cohesive landscape.

Your landscape designer also can help guide you through this process by explaining how a certain style can be achieved with plants that grow well in your area or by working within your proposed budget.



## 6. GET AN EXISTING SITE PLAN

Pull out copies of your home's purchase closing documents, there you should have a boundary survey. The survey shows property boundaries, the perimeter of the lot and the house and the locations of utility lines, water meters, and easements. If you cannot find a copy of your home's survey, most city or county planning departments will have it on file and can give you a copy for a fee. Typically for any improvement you have done at your house and pulled a permit, you have presented the survey, so look in those files too.

The home survey will be inserted in a design software and will serve as the foundation for your new landscape plan.





## 7. LEARN THE BASICS ABOUT WHAT GROWS IN YOUR AREA

It's well worth it to familiarize yourself with plants that you may want to add to your yard, If you want your plants to have specific characteristics, attract butterflies, birds, not poisonous to dogs, fragrance tell the designer. Take pictures of plants you love and those you do not like. Fast growing plants cost less than slow growing material, however fast growers will demand more maintenance. Some plants grow laterally, so you will get more horizontal fill; other grow more vertically and serve for other purposes.

Plant knowledge, whether your own or a professional's, can help save you time and money by getting the right plant in the right place from the start. The plants you choose also will affect the cost of the water and maintenance required to keep them thriving.



Nature's Dream  
*Landscape*

**TELL US** : Are you planning a landscape project?

**EMAIL** : [victoria@naturesdreamlandscape.com](mailto:victoria@naturesdreamlandscape.com)

**CELL** : 305-525-4671



**VICTORIA TRUCCO AND RAY RUEDA**

Victoria studied architecture and got a Master's in Landscape Architecture from FIU. Ray studied engineering and is a licensed Arborist, Irrigation, and Low Voltage contractor. Both have been performing landscape work in South Florida since 2,002.