

# Landscaping your outdoor spaces

A well-designed landscape is pleasing and functional, says architect Sangeetha Mayur

**J**ust like the rooms inside, the exterior of your home conveys your personality. You can transform outdoor space from blah to breathtaking; with cozy seating arrangements, greenery, lighting, and more. A well-designed home landscape is aesthetically pleasing and functional. It offers pleasure to the family, enhances the neighborhood, and adds to the property's resale value.

Homeowners today are increasingly drawn to adding outdoor rooms for entertaining and recreation on their properties. The most delightful experience is created when you think about the entire space and the overall effect you want to achieve than limiting your ideas to trees, shrubs, and grass. These outdoor living spaces widely include the porch, patios, decks, kitchen gardens, roof gardens, screening walls, outdoor lighting and decorative water elements that include waterfalls, ornamental pools & splash pools and transitional gardens that show demand for both sustainable and low-maintenance designs.

A few pointers that will help you create a personal landscape that reflects your family's wants and needs and allows for growth and change in the future.

## Understand your site and its environs

**Sun and Shade:** By knowing the direction of the sun at different times of the year, you can determine where trees will be needed to provide shade in the summer and where you will need open areas to allow the winter sun's rays to heat the house and outdoor living areas.

**Soil:** Many places are confronted with the difficult task of landscaping in "urban soils," which may include mortar, bricks, sheetrock, plywood, plastic, and other leftovers. It is important to clear up all construction debris and assess the top soil quality and depth for effective greenery.

**Sights and sounds:** A walk around your property to see what you see in various directions is an important factor. When standing on the front step, do you have a pleasant view? What do you see from the deck in the back yard? Also, take note of any objectionable noises that occur often. Note the good and bad



views and the sources of noise to locate the various outdoor activities.

## Assess your family activities and locate the use areas

Identifying your personal needs and wants will help you create a landscape that is aesthetically pleasing, enjoyable,



and functional for your family.

Determine the access to the house such as walkways, driveways and parking areas, discover family activities such as outdoor entertaining -- cooking, seating, children play area, get together & recreational spaces and allocate maintenance areas for storage of garden tools and vehicle equipments, pet kennels garbage bins, clothesline etc.,

Public, private (family), and service (utility) areas can usually be defined in residential landscapes by categorizing these activities, and dividing the site into several separate areas, each serving a specific purpose but all combined into the overall design.

## Blend hardscapes and softscapes

The objective is to create good visual relationships between the features on the site and the site itself. The creative spaces should reflect the priorities set by your family to satisfy its aesthetic values and functional requirements that include both plants and construction materials.

The softscape include specimen & group planting and edible landscapes with kitchen gardens and fruit trees that provide aesthetics and privacy. The hardscape is achieved with the use of varied energy efficient practices and construction materials. The combination of the hard & soft scapes is an integral part of the residential landscape.

## Adopt sustainable and low-maintenance practices

Use of native, drought resistant and appropriate plants suitable to our climate and adding edible plants to the kitchen garden helps to achieve low maintenance. Composting yard debris and using your compost as soil amendment helps to improve the quality of the urban soil. Drip/water-efficient irrigation, rain water harvesting techniques help to conserve water and choosing a permeable paving for the driveway and walkway surfaces allow for water to penetrate thus recharging the ground water tables. Use of recycled construction materials, solar powered water heaters and lights helps to conserve energy and contributes to the green environment.