

The Ultimate Cincinnati Landscape Design Guide



FLOURISH
WHO YOU ARE. WHERE YOU ARE



Introduction

Do you ever wonder why some landscapes seem to always look great? Those homeowners must be spending tons of money on their landscapes, right? Well, it actually depends on how they are designed whether or not they will need lots of care going forward. You see, the biggest mistake people make when budgeting for their landscape maintenance is that they overlook the changes that can be made in the design that will drastically reduce the amount of maintenance (and money!!) required to keep it looking awesome all the time.

Some landscapes do, indeed, take lots of care and money to look great, but it is NOT required. If you are looking to make your home a beautiful reflection of your style for the least amount of money in maintenance, then keep reading. I'm going to share with you all the secrets behind our over 200 wildly successful client projects from simple curb appeal upgrades to large back yard oases. While a landscape is never quite a 'set it and forget it' area of your home, it CAN become a very manageable place to enjoy and I'm going to show you how.

Hi, I'm Michelle Andersen, Design Director and Owner of Flourish Design, award winning Cincinnati Landscape Design Build company. I have spent over 20 years in the landscape industry collecting the TOP practices to not only design the most dazzling home landscapes, but how to keep them looking great over time. In my early days as a landscaper and architecture student at UC's DAAP program I asked myself, 'Why do some projects just look so beautiful over time?' and I started looking for answers.

Here I have compiled not only my studies and experiences from some of the world's top park systems and top designers, these are my PROVEN methods. Once I started my company in 2010, I got a chance to put my money where my mouth was and design for homeowners who trusted me to create low maintenance, high impact landscapes and that's exactly what they received.

If you follow my methods, you will also have a low maintenance, beautiful landscape that will allow you to spend more time and money on more fun things! So let's get to my TOP LANDSCAPE DESIGN SECRETS!

Secret #1

Think About Maintenance During Design

The one thing most landscapers and landscape designers DON'T know how to handle is the entire lifecycle of a landscape. They choose what looks great in the pots at the nursery and sell it to homeowners as if that's how they will stay. This is usually the worst way to plan a landscape because plants change every day from the moment they are planted. Additionally, people fail to think about how existing conditions in a landscape might be costing you time and money, so they don't fix the low hanging fruit. A typical landscape will require these five things to thrive:

- Mowing
- Weeding
- Edging
- Pruning
- Leaf Removal



If the design doesn't accommodate and anticipate the impact these activities will have, then you could be wasting lots of time and money every year. The easiest way to ensure your regular maintenance tasks are kept to a minimum is to design the following:

- Lawn areas that are easy to access by a mower
- Plant material that fills the garden beds as it matures, leaving little room for weeds
- Simple bed lines that are easy to edge, with bed edges kept to a minimum
- Plant material should be spaced according to its mature size so it doesn't need to be pruned much
- Avoid adding excess amounts of trees where leaves can drop into gutters, pools, and water features

If you follow all these guidelines, you will be amazed at how easy it is to do regular maintenance, PLUS, your landscape will look far tidier with minimal effort. Tidiness is one of the main ingredients to a wonderful looking landscape.



Secret #2

Focusing on LESS Stuff for MORE Impact

There are plenty of places to enjoy high maintenance landscapes and these should be kept to parks which have full time staff or homeowners who employ full time gardeners. Anything else should have the LEAST amount of plants and features to maintain as possible. When you add something to your landscape that requires maintenance, you are signing up for a lifetime of its care.

- Only have landscape beds with plantings where you see and enjoy them or where they have a function such as screening, remove the rest if they are requiring too much maintenance
- Planting beds should be as full as possible, leaving little room for mulch space that invites weeds
- Instead of several small beds, corral your impact around your entry or back patio and put some special color or features there
- When choosing a water feature, understand the maintenance required before committing
- Pools are tons of fun, be sure to budget time and money for pool care to make your Summer easy
- Choose the right materials and construction methods for patios and walking surfaces that are proven to be easy care like stone and quality pavers
- For decking and carpentry, cedar and composite materials hold up well outdoors for a long time, refrain from painting wood unless you need to keep with existing architectural detail and understand the maintenance required



Secret #3

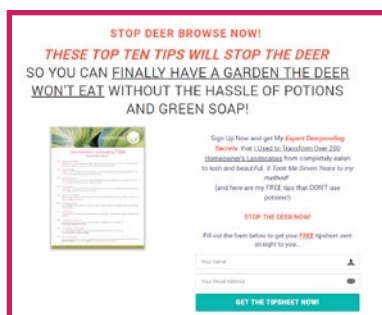
Work WITH The Deer, Not AGAINST Them

Any Cincinnati area resident knows about the deer eating peoples' landscapes, and perhaps you've suffered from this yourself. While most people just give up or buy potions and try hanging green soap up, there is an easy method that is actually overlooked (because it's SO easy). Deer actually don't eat ALL kinds of plants, only some of them. Once you are willing to plan your landscape around the plants the deer DON'T eat, you will find that the sprays and tricks are the biggest waste of money.

Use the sprays and tricks if you like wasting time and money, and enjoy fighting an upward battle. Otherwise, understand how the deer behave, and use the most deer resistant plants that are proven. These are my deerproofing tips:

- Remove all plants the deer are nibbling
- Replace those plants with deer resistant plants that are similar
- Cage young trees with fencing to avoid the deer rutting their antlers on the soft wood
- Throw away the potions!
- nce all vegetables inside an 8' fence (yup, sorry, folks)

Honestly, I'm not really sure why people try so hard to keep the deer off their plants when they have proven that they will eat them. All of our landscapes are completely deer resistant. If you'd like to have my deer resistant tips that we use for all of our awesome clients, you can download them FREE right here:



<http://bit.ly/ExpertDeerTips>

Secret #4

What Should I Do With My Hillside?

Let's face it, we live in a region with lots of hills and many of us have them in our yards. There is the notorious mini sled hill that goes between the sidewalk and the front lawn, the treacherously sloped back yard drop off, and lots of strange grandfathered walls that have made sense in years prior, but not anymore.

Handling the topography of your landscape with proper design can have a major impact on how you use your space and the way water drains on your site. Here are a few solutions we've provided over the years for clients that have changed their yards for the better that you may want to employ:

- Instead of planting ivy or euonymus - two heavily invasive vines - try planting a small mass of Grow Low Sumac to cover a small hillside. Once these fill in, they will require minimal care.
- By investing in a retaining wall for a gradual slope, you may be able to extend the play space available to you. You might be surprised how affordable these can be and how much added value you will get from creating a more level area.
- Address all drainage issues with a pro, and THEN plan your beautification. Trying to spend money on pretty things before you solve the root cause of the water problems will cost you more over time.
- If you've inherited a hillside of ivy or euonymus, maintain it seasonally by string trimming it back and weeding in Spring and Fall



Secret #5

Do I Need Irrigation?

With the unpredictable precipitation we receive, it can be hard to understand what to do when it comes to watering your landscape. At Flourish we are fans of using drought tolerant plants, even if our clients have irrigation. Here is a little reference for watering care:

- Install irrigation in your landscape beds and your turf if you want a meticulous emerald green lawn and super low maintenance watering.
- Install irrigation in your landscape beds only if you want either super low maintenance watering or travel often and need watering while you're gone and you are ok with your lawn having variations in color.
- Skip the irrigation but have hoses, sprinklers and a timer for your hose (get those online or at the hardware store) if you have drought tolerant plants and don't mind moving a sprinkler around when we experience a drought or heat wave.

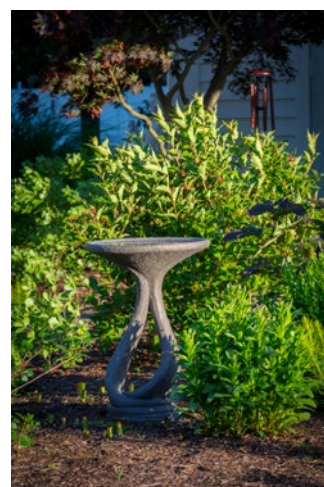


Secret #6

How Do I Prevent Landscape FOMO (Fear of Missing Out!!)?

Do you ever go online and get design envy? I never do that....(of course I do all the time!). There is just so much to love with all the great social media and I don't want you to feel left out. The way to prevent Landscape FOMO is to give yourself and your family what you need. NOURISH your design soul by giving yourself BEAUTY and SPACE FOR EXPERIENCES that matter to you. Then all that FOMO will go away, because your needs will be met.

- Think of your landscape as another room in your home. With the right design you can watch movies, eat dinner, or play games outside comfortably for most of the year.
- Decide what you are dreaming about the most and see how you can make it happen by collecting a few images that speak to the budget you'd like to land at. Amazing spaces can be created at any budget level with creativity. Then go about deciding if you are going to do that project yourself or get help.
- Think about what's missing from your home life and add a space that fits that need such as a reading nook with an umbrella, an amazing set of colorful containers, or a fire pit for gathering.



- Some landscape trends look cooler than they actually are. Think about whether or not you would use a bocce ball court before you build one.
- When considering budget, think about more than the value an improvement will add to your home. You are investing in your personal quality of life, so you want to consider how it would make you feel to give yourself the gift of a new landscape area.
- Furniture does a lot for a bare space. If you have a deck that isn't exciting, head over to your favorite home store or online catalogue and get some pieces that will create a new vibe and invite some fun times. I recommend teak, powder coated aluminum, and synthetic wicker for longevity. If you're on a budget hit up second hand sources or get a treated picnic table.

Whether you are looking for a real investment for your home life or need to get your fix on a budget, there are lot's of options to get what you need. I use Pinterest and Houzz when I need to jump start my ideas. Head over to our Pinterest here, <https://www.pinterest.com/flourishby/>, or our Houzz profile here, <http://bit.ly/FlourishHouzz>. Once you have a collection of images you like, it's easy to start imagining where to go next in order to make your space a reality.



BONUS SECRETS

I know you are going to want a guide to implementing your amazing ideas, so here I share my secrets comparing DIY, working with a smaller crew, and working with professionals.

BONUS Secret #1:

Should I DIY?

Taking your landscape into your own hands is for a small number of the population, but I'd like to speak to you die hards specifically, since I love your style. I am among you. Planting plants is simple, but choosing them and laying them out in a way that looks amazing and professional can be a challenge. And it is right there that you will want to focus your energy for that professional look.

- Create a sketch of your landscape, no matter how rudimentary. Use this to make notes and plan out your improvements. This will allow you to make a proper list of what you need, and nothing more.
- Make your list of plants and materials you intend to get before you go to the nursery. It's fine to get some fun new plant friends on the fly, but if you go with a list and plan, you will save time and money.
- Be sure to only take on the amount of DIY you can handle. Often times people plan to do things for too long and they don't get done, or they begin a project and don't finish it. Bring value to your time and hire out as needed or calendar an entire weekend in advance to tackle your task.

DIY is very close to my heart and if you really want to go deeper into this arena and need some guidance, I have packaged up my amazing DIY tip for you. Find out more here if you would like the Flourish method for DIYing your own landscape right here: <http://bit.ly/DIYLandscapeTips>

BONUS Secret #2:

Know How to Spot the 'Guy With a Truck'

Real transparency here, there are some great guys and gals in the landscape industry, and there are some not so great guys. If you've ever been burned by a home professional, you know what I mean. And if you haven't, I hope it stays that way. The NUMBER ONE complaint I receive from potential clients is that they have had a bad experience with a contractor before they found Flourish. I hate hearing this! But why is this the case? Many people in the residential remodeling industry are there because they started out using the skill they are selling, *not* because they are great business people. That means they might:

- Not understand customer service
- Not be able to handle the challenges of running business AND performing that skill at the same time
- Say they can do something, when they really can't

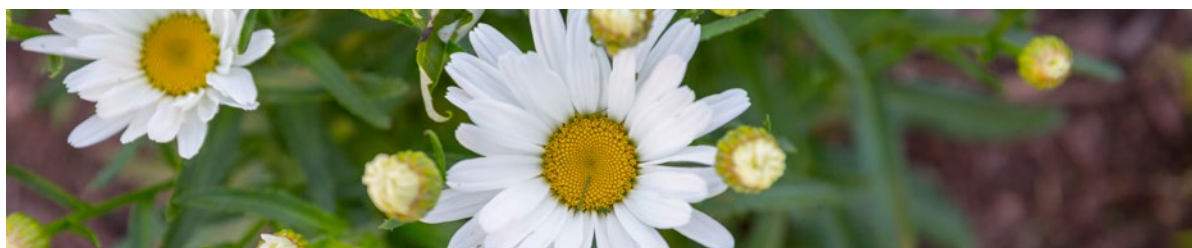
The result is that many of these trade professionals are either failing at the business side of their operation, or if they have a business background, they may be failing at the skill part. In particular, watch out for the 'Guy With a Truck'.



Now let's start by giving Guy (or Gal) some props. This person has gone out on their own and may be cheap...hey, I started out like that, too...but this person is still learning. You will be getting what you're paying for here, unless you have found a person who isn't charging what they are worth. It's really easy to figure out if your lawn is mowed properly, and the edging is done, but when it comes to plants, you need an experienced professional. Here's how to navigate choosing plant material with your industry pro (and to suss out if he or she is just one of these *truck* people):

- DO tell them the plants you like, and expect understanding comments in return such as, 'That's an awesome shrub, but it loves full sun. What about this other one that looks similar?'
- DON'T point at your neighbors yard and ask your professional to get the exact same things the neighbor has unless they can explain whether or not those plants will work in your location.
- DO ask the professional you have chosen to share with you what they are good at. Stick with the items they rattle off, and if you're unsure, ask to see some photos of completed work. Any great project will be documented on their phone. If they say they don't really do water features...trust me, they don't.
- DON'T treat every aspect of landscaping as if every landscaper knows how to perform that task or install that feature. Specialty tasks like pruning can be done poorly if someone isn't trained and create irreversible damage. Installing things such as patio pavers are also a specialty. Some landscapers can do horticultural tasks like pruning well, but not pavers and vice versa.

With these few tips, you will be sure to be ahead of the curve when it comes to selecting the right trades people to help you with your landscaping for smaller projects. Now keep in mind that full design projects are an entirely different story.



BONUS Secret #3:

Free Landscape Designs Aren't Really Free

I have no problem pointing out how the business of landscape design works, because we have honed our craft based on client feedback and I hope this section illuminates some of the marketing tactics that are at work in the landscape industry. Your typical landscaper probably sucks at marketing so if you happen to have one that is also amazing at design and you work well together, then please give me his number!

My guess is that, since you are reading this, you have some desire or need to find the right fit for some aspect of your landscape and here is a breakdown of some terms and tactics that may help:

- Landscape Designer - this person should know plants, outdoor materials, how landscapes need to be maintained and design concepts well. They may or may not have a degree or certification in this field, and many great ones are self taught.

Typically charges an hourly rate or a fee or receives a salary or a commission



- Landscape Architect - similar to the above, but has a degree and very specific technical knowledge

Typically charges an hourly rate or a fee or receives a salary or commission

- Landscaper - this person will have a variety of talents and may be self taught or have a degree or certificate in the field. Some landscapers double as talented designers and either have the ability to make up designs as they go along, or actually draw something up for you. At a bare minimum they should be able to understand how to plant plants and care for them. Some landscapers only do maintenance, some only install and some do both.

Typically charges a fee for design or offers it for *free* if you are building with them. The design is not free, it is built into their overhead costs.

Typically charges an hourly rate plus materials or provides an estimate for aspects of a project with labor and materials noted but tallied as a lump sum

- Gardener - this person may tend or maintain gardens but may or may not do larger aspects of landscape care or installation.
- Landscape Design Builder - this is a one stop shop for design, project management, and installation with an emphasis on great design.

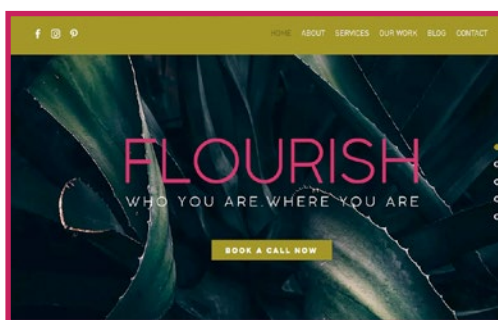
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While there may be exceptions to each of these, I have noted the most common practices in my 20 years of experience. The main point I want to express to you is that you will want to trust the professional you welcome onto your property and allow that relationship to flourish. ;)

Work With Flourish

If you are ready to discuss a landscape project and are interested in finding out if Flourish is a fit for you, we would be happy to hear what you need. We specialize in creating beautiful outdoor living spaces for people who live to enjoy hanging out at home. You can view a catalogue of our process, case studies, and portfolio of our work on our website of front yard upgrades, fire pits, patios, pools and more.



View our website at:
www.flourishbydesign.com





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