



DARGAN Landscape Architects, Inc.

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DARGAN Landscape Architects

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Landscape Appreciation: Introduction

- Scale and design principles
- Approach and arrival sequence
- The hub
- Perimeters
- Passages and destinations

Scale and design principles

Scale

- It is important to think about landscape design, not only in terms of different spaces, shapes and materials, but to consider the relationship of scale.
- A human figure in the landscape gives a good sense of scale and allows for a quick approximation of the height of trees, so get a friend to stand next to a tree or a tall feature in a garden to estimate the height.
- Tall features, such a repetition of Italian Cypress trees as seen in the slideshow, echoed by tall architectural columns, demonstrate two design principle—upward-looking views and repetition.

Design Principles

- View the slideshow for examples of:
 - An axial view—achieved by drawing the eye to look in a straight line.
 - A cross axial view—allows the observer to look left or right.
 - A node—the areas where axial and a cross axial views meet—this is usually the point at which two walkways cross.

The four-part master plan

- The four-part master plan is a way of categorizing the functional aspects of a garden landscape to develop the best use of each area, and consists of:
 - The approach and arrival sequence—starts at the entrance to the drive, or the front path, and leads to the parking areas and the front door.
 - The hub—the house—at the center of the design, if not at the center of the actual plot.
 - The perimeter—the spaces around the hub that are easily serviced by the house, for example, a terraced area or an area for grilling.
 - The passages and destinations—areas further from the house that are accessed by walkways, such as water gardens, pools, tennis courts or retreats.

Approach and arrival sequence

- Always look to the character of the house when designing the approach and arrival sequence.
- One of the important functions of the approach and arrival sequence is to empower the hub. Consider opportunities to achieve an inward view—where a visitor is looking at the front of the house or at the front door.
- Elements such as the alignment of steps that approach the door and the position of the parking should all contribute towards empowering the hub.
- The importance of the apron of a driveway can often be overlooked, but it should be viewed by a landscape designer as the welcome mat that you put out for your guests.
- Nodes of color either side of the apron are a great way to say hello to neighbors and to welcome guests—remember the importance of creating a strong first impression.
- View the slideshow to see examples of the approach and arrival sequence including:
 - A small pedestrian entrance to a mountain property—note that the node occurs at the entrance between two pillars.
 - A large stately property with a lozenge of grass running along the center of a long granite block drive—even a small area of grass will give a cooling effect, break up the monotony of paving and help to recharge the groundwater.
 - An arrival court node with inset patterns of grass or ophiopogon—helps to avoid the storm water drainage problems associated with a large paved area.
 - A brick-paved parking area broken up with rectangles of grass in the parking bays—helps to break up the monotony of paving, designates the parking spaces and helps to control oil spills on the hard landscape.
 - A path with grass growing between the cracks—could alternatively have a mélange of different ground covers.
 - A house with an arrival sequence that consists of only a path leading from the street—an opportunity to welcome visitors with a splash of color, by placing pots either side of the path adjacent to the curb.
 - A small arrival node area that provides enough space to stop, put down an umbrella, and then walk up to the front door.
 - A Mediterranean-style house with three colors of stone paving forming a pattern on the floor an entrance porch.

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The hub

- Remember, hub design should consider the vernacular materials of the house, and the landscaping should reflect the color and style of the house.
- View the slideshow to see hub design treatments including:
 - A house in North Carolina that echoes the flavor of the wooded local environment, by using shingles made of local bark and a pathway constructed of local stone—local materials accent the vernacular flavor.
 - A 17th century, French geometric landscape focused on the hub with outward views created by long axial lines—employing the principles of geometry to enhance a very grand structure.
 - A Regency-style house with a very restrained treatment of a granite driveway and Portland cement rendering to the walls. The bilaterally symmetrical design is repeated in the backyard of the house, with a bilaterally symmetrical pool and planting—well suited to a very formal house.
 - A house in Atlanta with a busy cottage-style garden to echo the style of the house and the locality.
 - A very tall house that shows how tall trees (palmettos) can be used to subordinate the height.
 - A Colonial Revival-style house with inward and outward views, framed by four zumi crabapples and a series of boxwoods, arranged bilaterally symmetrical to echo the symmetry of the house.
 - An inward-looking view that displays bilateral symmetry—looking across the length of a pool to a grass area, framed by Yoshino cherries that create a cloud of pink in the springtime. The outward view has a focal point of a pavilion—making a focal point object three-quarters its usual size, and progressively reducing the sizes of repeated objects or spaces that recede into the distance, can create an effective false perspective and give a greater sense of depth.
 - An Italianate house under construction—shows how wooded landscaping from an adjoining property can be incorporated into the master plan to improve views—take advantage of visible assets, even if they are on adjacent land.
 - A small courtyard garden in Charleston, South Carolina, with axial geometry and bilateral symmetry formed by a curving node, or lozenge, and a 3' high statue as a focal point—all elements combine to make the space seem much larger, an effect that can be achieved with hardscape or with grass-scape.
 - An interior with a gilded frame set into a wall to frame the view of a garden which displays the principles of axial geometry—the bilaterally symmetrical lozenge, and the terminating focal point.
 - Another interior with a window that is not able to take advantage of bilateral symmetry or axial views—of course not all windows can be afforded a carefully planned view and may just enjoy a picture of the world outside,
 - A historic recreation in Charleston, South Carolina, with an axial outward view through a parterre garden—a fragment of the original landscape indicates the original intention of the builders was to create a similar outward-looking view.

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Perimeters

- View the slideshow to see perimeter area treatments including:
 - A house where zoning restrictions meant it was not possible to build a pool in the yard, and yet the pool is still close to the house—achieved by elevating the pool above the level of a lower part of the house.
 - A small courtyard terrace, leading from the house, with outdoor furniture chosen to reflect the French architecture and the style of the furniture indoors.
 - A simple outdoor seating area near the dining area of a mountain house, and a guesthouse, pool, pavilion and sunken garden connected by many paths and entrances.
 - A garden with great attention to detail in how the space is used, with a seating area near to the house, and a paved node that provides room for people to stand during a party or to sit at a table.
 - A tiny courtyard in Charleston, South Carolina with bluestone paving, gray washed walls and gray-green tables and chairs to create a serene dining area in a busy city.
 - A small grill garden for children, at the back of a mansion, with a small bench and wing wall seating—the owner preferred a grill on wheels rather than a brick-built grill—it is important to remember to listen to your clients' needs.
 - A pool area with cooling jets, bilateral symmetry and a focal point of a pavilion—demonstrates the visual impact of a small space when design principles are applied.
 - A courtyard with a fountain and bluestone paving—the sound of the water, the birds it attracts and Yoshino cherry trees all combine to create a serene setting.
 - A terrace with an arbor, accessed directly from the house, with a roof of wisteria and a view out to a river.
 - A pavilion with a dining area that has been lined up directly with a window.
 - An outdoor fireplace that was actually once inside a house that was demolished—now at the center of a grill area.
 - A tennis court that is hidden from a seating area in the perimeter by planting, including climbing roses—veiled enclosures are very important to create garden rooms and create an edge. Remember, people feel more comfortable sitting in room-like spaces. An arbor or a roof above can create wonderful alfresco seating areas without intrusions.
 - A terrace area with pots on stands to give the sense of the edge of a room—when designing perimeter seating units, always look to the colors of the house and the interior furnishings, because the view out can be as exquisitely detailed as what is inside. Try to minimize container planting in a perimeter area. Usually no more than four planters or pots are sufficient to frame an entrance to an area.
 - A grass area—or great lawn—with a large tent installed on it for entertaining. Remember to consider the future prospect of erecting a tent for parties if you are planting trees in on grass.

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Passages and destinations

- View the slideshow to see examples of passages and destinations including:
 - A property with a passage that disappears in a curve around a corner to give a sense of wonder and mystery, and a gothic twig pavilion in keeping with the mountain vernacular.
 - A map of a garden at Stowe House, in England, that illustrates a number of pavilions and the routes to reach them—showing that destinations in gardens have been a part of landscape design for hundreds of years.

Pathways

- A brick winding path with a node with a seating area, with pot ears and other pathways branching off.
- Old slabs of crab orchard stepping stones around a very large mansion perimeter.
- Paving with mazus growing between the cracks—will live in most environments up to zone six—and creeping jenny to give seasonal change.
- A pathway that is used as a border edging—think of ways that you can use a path; it doesn't have to be directionally straight to an object; it can frame the garden perimeter.
- A pathway that follows the curve of a bed and meets with a fountain.

Steps

- A set of English round steps with a circle of grass in the center to really make a statement—English steps were perfected in the arts and craft movement by Gertrude Jekyll (1843—1932) and Sir Edward Lutyens (1869—1944).
- A set of grass-topped amphitheater steps with repeated curves that echo the architecture of the house.
- A set of steps flowing up to a house in the vernacular style of brick and stone.
- A very formal Georgian house with a double-loaded balustrade in an Italian grotto fashion.

Gates

- A curved gate, known as a moon gate—vines cover a curved gazebo above.
- Grass ramp steps used to navigate several feet of grade change—axially aligned with an arbor and a pavilion, to maximize the view.

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Pools and retreats

- A pool and pool house, approached through a wild flower meadow through iron gates.
- A shady swimming pool with ophiopogon growing between stepping stones—an example of how creative design can give a swimming pool a look more like a natural oasis than an area of hard landscaping. Similarly, the slideshow includes a pool where the paving has been removed on one side and replaced by planting, creating the look of a tropical oasis.
- An outward view to a pool with a vanishing edge which blends with a view of marshland beyond—prevents the very hardline structure from becoming overly dominant. The reflective surface allows the observer to see clouds floating by in the water, and the greenish-colored bottom to the pool mimics the color of the marsh.
- A retaining wall to a pool with tile panels of art showing the story of the family's life in animal form—think about how your story can be expressed on your own property.
- A statue of a crane against a wall of a tiny pool—scale is a very important consideration when designing water bodies or retreats.
- A sunken garden used as a way to overcome zoning restrictions where nothing could be more than 4' tall—drainage is an important consideration, especially in a flood-prone area and the garden uses a sump pump to avoid flooding at high tide.
- A pond with a dominant planting material color of purple—becomes even more enlivened at night when illuminated by low voltage lighting.

Other destinations

- Remember, a destination can be passive or active—passive destinations would be areas to sit or to look at flowers; an active destination would be to swim, to play tennis or to pick fruit.
- A perennial garden with an outward view to a lake—think in terms of blocks of color, and use a dollop of white to make a color really pop, for example, a little bit of white will make a blue look even bluer.
- A tennis court hidden by trellis and climbing vines.
- A formal garden—notice the bilateral symmetry in the formal garden in Charleston, shown in the slideshow. It has four parts and a center focal point—this is the traditional design of a formal garden.
- A formal garden under construction showing pipes emerging from the ground for electricity and for water, and the same garden when all the work and the planting was completed.
- A mixed kitchen garden with vegetables, fruit, herbs and perennials—a garden that demands a lot of maintenance.
- A woodland garden—one of the hardest landscaping projects. Remember that a woodland walk should be very three dimensional, with small, medium and then large size plants, with trees behind to create a private paradise.

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Landscape Appreciation: Homework Assignment

In this assignment

1. Identify master plan elements on your property
2. Identify what works and what doesn't work

1. Identify master plan elements on your property

- Take a look at the outside of your property or another property and write which areas are a part of the approach and arrival sequence, the hub, the perimeter and the destinations and passages.

2. Identify what works and what doesn't work

- Take pictures and write down in a couple of sentences, what works well and what doesn't work well. What do you think can be improved? What are the weak and strong links between the destinations?