

YOUR NEW HOME

Landscape Planning For New Homes and Remodels

By Janet Green, Principal Landscape Architect

Many people ask me, when they are starting to think about a new residential landscape project, what is involved and how we as landscape architects are involved. There are several big questions such as, "How long does it take?", "How much does it cost?", and "How will it change my property's value?" The answers of course, depend upon the complexity of the project, but the process is almost always the same. The exception to the usual process comes when we consult on an hourly basis, by answering questions for the do-it-yourselfer.

We begin by designing a Master Plan. This level of detail has information drawn to a specific scale and includes the footprint of the house, driveway and any existing elements, such as walkways and plants that are to be removed or remain. We add, according to your wish list, the various elements you would like to add

or change, such as new paths, planting areas, lawns for family fun or curb appeal, outdoor rooms for cooking or sitting by the fire, decks, ponds and lighting. Even if you are just interested in starting small, you can build a direction for the whole garden and make decisions for phasing and building onto your garden that make the whole garden flow easily, both visually and physically. It can take anywhere from three to six months to decide on a direction or schematic plan for your yard.

After agreeing on a plan, you will need Construction Documents for reviewing agencies' approvals and for landscape contractors to give you a price. You will also need to provide plans to your homeowners association if you are changing levels or are constructing any additional structures, such as fencing or sheds. A structural engineer will need to draft calculations and details if you are adding a deck and you

will need to submit to the local government building dept. for a building permit, which can add time to the process depending on how many other projects they have when you submit. The time it takes to create Construction Documents depends on how many new elements you are adding and their details. It can take the same amount of time as the Schematic Plan or more, for this step of the process. It is best to submit in early winter to allow enough time to get approved by spring. Selecting lighting and paving materials and specifying types of wood or plants to direct the builder, all happen before the Construction Documents can be finished.

After you have design review approval and a building permit, you will want to get bids for the cost of your project. Usually bids from three landscape contractors will give you information to choose one that can do the job. It is important to have good communication with your contractor, so you will want someone you feel comfortable working with as well as someone you feel will give you good results for a fair price. Your landscape architect can help with the bidding process by itemizing each step and making sure that all of the contractors are including the same work in their estimates.

After your contractor is selected you begin the process of building the project.

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A Sampling of our Menu...

ANTI-PASTI & SALAD

Seared Ahi Sashimi with marinated cucumbers, seaweed salad, tobiko and ginger soy 11

Traditional Caesar salad romaine leaves with house-made dressing and parmigiana crumble 9

MAINS

Paella clams, mussels, fresh fish, and chorizo with sauteed vegetables and saffron risotto 20

Filet Mignon certified Angus Beef with zinfandel demi-glace served with garlic mashed potatoes and broccolini 29

WOOD FIRED PIZZA & PASTA

Soba Noodles a ginger-vegetable stir fry, fresh cilantro, spicy teriyaki broth with prawns or beef 20

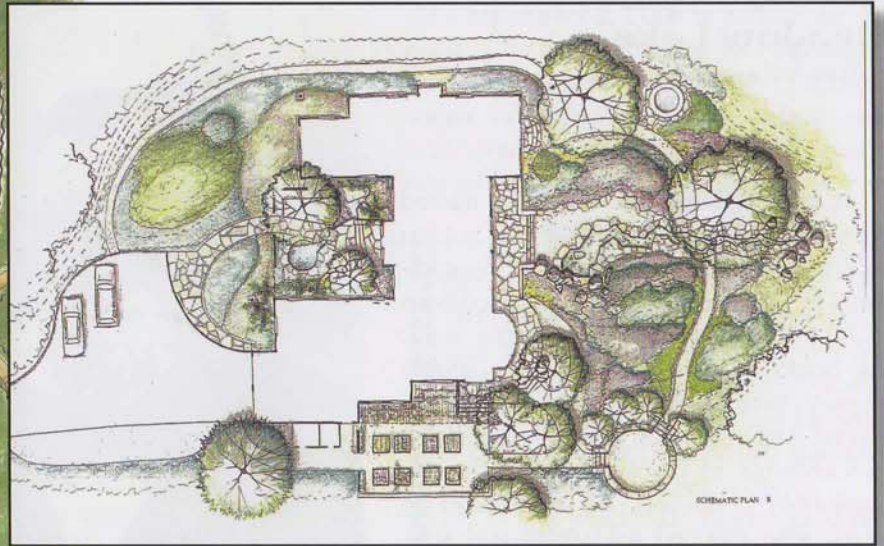
Argentine Sausage Pizza empanada, extra virgin olive oil, kalamata olives, feta

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The amount of time it takes depends on the project, but most projects can be completed in one season. Better not schedule that outdoor birthday party or 4th of July event because there will be things that you did not plan on, such as another job emergency that takes the contractor away for a period of time, weather interferences or underground boulders that weren't part of the plan. Job emergencies come up in almost every job and that's why it's important to have your landscape architect standing by for observation and consultation. Whether it be to check on plants to make sure the right ones were delivered, make substitutions if some are sold out or to make sure that the plans are followed so you can

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