

The Home Owners Guide to Landscaping.

*Check list enclosed
that could save you
from making a major
mistake with your
landscaping project.*

The Home Owners Guide to Landscaping

Disclaimer

This booklet is designed to provide education or entertainment on the subject matter enclosed, however neither the publisher or contributors assumes any responsibilities for errors, inaccuracies, omissions or advise. If accounting, legal or other professional advise or expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sort. Each individual reader is solely and wholly responsible for any decisions made or actions taken that may be motivated from the material.

Contents

Testimonials	04
Introduction	05
What do you want to use your landscape for	06
Choosing a Theme	07
What do you want in your landscape?	08
Setting a budget	09
You need to have a Plan	10
Choosing the right Plants	11
Get the ground work right	12
Good Layout (Part of a good design)	13
Selecting a Designer/Landscaper	14
Checklist (Where to from here)	15
Extra resources	18
Notes	19

Testimonials

“I would like to convey our sincere appreciation of the very professional service which you provided in producing the concept design, plans, and working drawings for our new Adventure Playground.

Your advice and help with the project right from your ideas for the original concept, through to construction of the whole area was invaluable”

Papatoetoe West School

“We are thrilled with the plans you have done for our garden and are going to stick to it religiously... Sue, we have recently learnt that the Nikau palm is one palm that cannot be re-sighted, once the roots are dislodged the tree dies. Apparently. So, thank-you all the same for your kind offer of seeking a home for this tree.

Please feel free at anytime to drop by and view the progress. We would love to see you.”

Nick & Melanie

“Thank you so much for the plan. We were thrilled with the shape and ideas within it. I can see it will be quite a long term project on our part ... but we have already made a start”

Pat, Howick

“Since our groundsman left, the roses have been sadly neglected as we have had no one who has any real expertise in pruning to undertake this job. So it was with gratitude to see that have taken the time out of your busy schedule to help us out in this field”

Papatoetoe Intermediate School

Introduction

Susan has been designing gardens for 19 years. Landscape design remains a passion and give expression for the desire to paint, draw and write poetry. It is a great joy to see an elegant garden design installed in a client's property.

For Susan 'good design' is about combining design elements like: balance, symmetry, theme, focus, drama, serenity, colour, texture and surprise, with good honest craftsmanship. Susan values environment responsibility and sustainability in plant choice and landscape materials included in her designs.

Susan has found it important to consider the needs of all family members; young, old, 2 legged and 4 legged, when taking a brief for garden design.



For many people, the garden design process is a mystery. New Zealanders are keen DIY gardeners and this booklet is designed to assist home owners, to create their own landscape without blowing the budget or 'painting themselves into a corner.'

Here's to "Great Landscapes"

Susan Warrington
Landscape Designer

BSc, Dip Tchg, Dip Surface Coatings, Dip Landscape Design

What do you want to use your landscape for?

When we have the first meeting with any client about their landscaping project one of the first questions I ask is - “What is the purpose of this landscaping?”

- ? What is it going to be used for?
- ? For example will it be used for outdoor entertaining?
- ? Is it to finish your new home and hopefully increase the value of it or make it easier to sell.
- ? Or maybe it's just a visual based landscape with no other purpose than to make your property look great
- ? Do you want to have an area for your children or Grandchildren to play in?
- ? Does it need to have many purposes and requires consideration from several points of view.
- ? Maybe it's a Driveway area that needs to look good and be practical at the same time.

Before any of the other many important factors to getting a great landscaping project completed, this first question must be thought about and answered.



The purpose of my landscape is.....

.....

.....

.....

HOT TIP:
You usually need to finish all exterior construction on your house before starting any Landscaping

Choosing a theme

So now you have decided on the purpose of your landscape, the next thing to consider is what do you want your landscape to look like?

What “THEME” are you going to choose

Unless you have a large property it is normally best to select one theme for your entire property. This will normally look better.

More than one theme can be confusing and unattractive to the eye.

That being said if you decide to have multiple themes it is important to blend them together rather than be separated. (For example many of our “New Zealand Natives” will work well and look really good with a tropical theme.)

Some natives also respond well to being trimmed in formal borders or hedges, and therefore look right at home in a formal garden.

Palms arranged in rows can take on a formal feel. Therefore if you live

in an area where tropical gardens are very popular and you require a formal look, you could arrange a garden with borders, standardised roses, etc and then arrange palms in rows for a formal effect.

When considering a theme it is also important to consider:

- The Climate
- Severity of Seasons
- Your Preferences
- The Size of your Section
- Aspect of section
- Proximity to coast or other natural conditions
- Neighbouring properties

Themes to consider may include:

- Native - Minimalist
- Formal - Traditional
- Tropical
- A combination of more than one

HOT TIP:

Check out my website for ideas:

www.sueslandscapes.co.nz

What do you want in your landscape?

- ☐ Patio
- ☐ Pathway/s
- ☐ Pergola
- ☐ Shade sail
- ☐ Gazebo
- ☐ Timber Deck
- ☐ Steps
- ☐ Seating
- ☐ BBQ area
- ☐ BBQ storage
- ☐ Retaining
- ☐ Garden Edging
- ☐ Lawn area shape, size, and location
- ☐ Arbor/s & Trees
- ☐ Swimming pool, Spa or future spa area
- ☐ Driveway
- ☐ Walling
(Textured and painted)
- ☐ Fencing
- ☐ Gate/s
- ☐ Screens
- ☐ Water feature
- ☐ Bridge
- ☐ Rock location and sizing
- ☐ Lighting
- ☐ Gas flares
- ☐ Bollards
- ☐ Rope work
- ☐ Outdoor bar
- ☐ Outdoor fire place
- ☐ Pentanque area
- ☐ Tennis court
- ☐ Bush walk track
- ☐ Child's play area
- ☐ Garden shape, proportion, and location
- ☐ Plant varieties, location, and quantities

Many of these items can be expensive and are often used in landscapes with large budgets

When making this decision you need to consider the following.

✓ Your Budget

✓ Your Theme

The size of your property will also have a major impact on this selection process.

Probably the most important thing is what you like or don't like.

You have many options to choose from with many on this list.

HOT TIP:

When choosing what you want remember to consider height restrictions from neighbouring properties, your life style, property location and climate. (E.G. timber decking can be slippery if built on a shady side of the house or in a frosty location)

Setting a budget

It is important to set a budget and be realistic.

You may now have your dream list of what you want, the theme etc and will now have to work out if it fits with your budget.

“ *As a rule of thumb, to provide a very nice fully finished landscape with all of the work done for you, an allowance of 5% to 15% of the Land and house value is required. This includes fencing, driveway, patios etc.* ”

This ensures a good quality landscape while making sure you don't over capitalise.

To reduce this figure several things can be done.

First just focus on one area of your section. Maybe the area you plan to spend most of your time in when outdoors.

Then complete other parts as your budget allows.



Use a hand sketched concept plan. A set of landscape plans can cost many hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

Use smaller plants at time of landscaping. If done correctly, the end result will be the same. Or you could do most of the work yourself to reduce the overall cost.

HOT TIP:

Any item that requires construction will generally be the most expensive part of your landscaping project. If your budget is limited avoid these types of items unless absolutely necessary.

design knowledge is more than adequate for many landscaping projects.

For a more complex project use a black and white or colour hand drawn plan which is to scale and shows all construction items and plants drawn in location with species, variety and quantity all listed.

A hand-drawn landscape plan showing a central paved area, a house with a porch, and surrounding landscaping with various plant species and sizes indicated.

Choosing the right plants

This is where the value of a good landscape plan really pays for itself.

It is really important to know what plants are going to look good with a certain type of property.

Things to consider before even selecting the plants are the elements such as sun, shade, frost, wind, temp, and soil conditions.

Once we have done this we then start selecting plants and take in to consideration how big the plant will grow (how wide and how tall) the shape and colour of the plant.

Once plant selection is completed then the maturity of the plant (subject to availability) has to be considered.

Obviously younger plants will be cheaper.

They may take a little longer to grow but the end result will be the same.

HOT TIP:

If planting in summer soak the plants well before planting. Don't plant the plants too DEEP. As some plants require special planting requirements check with your plant supplier prior to planting. Use stakes as required to reduce possible wind damage. Just remember, stake as you plant.



Get the ground work right

Before a shovel is even dug into the ground it is important to know what the finished levels are going to be.

If you are only completing part of your property to start with, then a plan for the full section will help here and allow you to continue on later without too many headaches.

There are certain levels that must be maintained to ensure you comply with the building code and don't jeopardise your code of compliance.

Another issue to consider and check out before you start any landscaping project is drainage. Make sure the water ends up where it is supposed to after rain.

NB: Generally a plan does not provide actual levels unless required, although it will show level changes (If required).



HOT TIP:
Make sure you get the ground levels right to meet the requirement of local council code of compliance. If you have any doubts in regards to drainage, consult with a drain layer

Good layout (part of a good design)

So you need to think seriously about what hard structure (constructed items) you are going to need for your landscape.

Just remember many of the hard structures on your wish list will push the price up so be realistic. You may have to choose carefully if your initial budget is tight.

Whether that is

Driveways

Decks

Paved areas

A Shade Sail

A pergola

A patio

HOT TIP:
Get all of the large items in place first such as large boulders or decks built etc. A plan helps this happen

Then all of this needs to be sized in proportion with the garden beds, Lawns and general layout for your new section.

This also needs to tie in with the theme of your gardens and the plant selection as talked about previously.



Selecting a Designer/Landscaper

You will need to consider many things.

What do you want done and does the designer or landscaper skill set match this.

Don't be afraid to Ask questions!

Ask to see their credentials.

How long have they been in business.

Ask for references.

Ask to see a port-folio of their work. This is a really good way to see how good they really are.

Do they have a website for you to visit for more information.

When do you want to start your project, and is the company you're considering able to complete the design and or project on time.

On the first meeting the Designer/Landscaper should be able to give

you a reasonable indication of what they would do with your property if designing a landscape.

With projects of a smaller scope it may be possible to obtain a reasonably close indication of possible ideas and pricing.

For larger projects it would be normal to spend time working out various options and then getting back to you with ideas at another time.

What are their guarantees.

They must be prepared to provide you with a written quote. (Not a verbal) Do not commit to anything whether it's a landscaping plan or a large project until you are sure of what you are getting and you have a written proposal outlining details of work to be done. This is common sense and protects both parties.

Possibly one of the most important things to consider is whether or not you feel you can get on with the person or people or company you are considering.

HOT TIP:

A good designer or landscaper can be booked up for weeks or months ahead allow for this and other possible delays such as bad weather. While delays can be frustrating it is important to get it done once and get it done properly.

CHECK LIST (Where to from here)

You could employ a company to take care of your entire project from planning stages right through to completion.

You could do it all your self or a combination of both.

I have put this checklist together. It has been put into an approximate order for things to be done. Each project should be considered based on it's own merit, and decisions made accordingly.

If you are unsure you should always consult a professional.

HOT TIP:
If your not sure you can complete a particular task satisfactorily then it may be better to wait until your budget allows you to engage a professional. It gets very expensive if they have to be redone.



- ✓ Have your House completed or close to completion (exterior must be totally finished prior to any landscaping).
- ✓ Arrange a spare set of house plans (if you engaging a designer/landscaper.)
- ✓ Go through the steps listed in this book and decide what you are after.
- ✓ Have a Landscape plan or sketch prepared to work from. (You can do this yourself if you wish, however you will need to have a reasonable understanding of plants and other items mentioned earlier to make sure the landscape will work well and look right.)
- ✓ Decide what you can do your self (be realistic - only do the things you know you can do really well.)
- ✓ Decide what you will have done by professionals and choose those you will work with.

Checklist Continued...

- ✓ Obtain a quote from contractors for items you don't wish to complete yourselves.

- ✓ Level or prepare site with bobcat or excavator, remembering to allow for correct finishing heights against house. For more information on this contact your local council or consult a landscaper.

HOT TIP:

The Bobcat or Excavator driver will require clear instructions as to your requirements. They will also require direction and supervision.

- ✓ Prior to any construction, bring onto site and place anything large or heavy that will be difficult or impossible to handle at a later date. e.g. Large rocks that require a bobcat. Complete these items before you lay the driveway and/or build a front feature wall for example.

- ✓ Identify other items that may need to be completed prior to loss of or restricted site access. (E.g. Swimming

pool. These items can usually be done at a later date, however it is usually more expensive with poor access). Decide on the best sequence for garden elements to be installed, e.g. decking, pathways, patio, or perhaps a pergola.

- ✓ Place balance of rocks (if having rocks)

HOT TIP:

Prior to planting, you would usually install items that require construction. This is generally because they are "gardened" up to or around.

- ✓ Dig up or excavate garden beds to desired or required heights. Again allow for correct finishing heights against house or fences etc.

- ✓ Decide on your garden location/s, shape/s and size/s and mark out with spray can.

- ✓ Organise a concrete edging/mow strip company to install edging.

- ✓ Lay out plants as per design and plant all plants.
- ✓ Use stakes as required as you go. (This helps avoid excessive wind damaged.)

HOT TIP:

In most cases you wouldn't place garden beds up against fencing as this will have a rotting effect. If you are unsure you should consult a professional.

- ✓ Be careful not to plant too deep as this can cause problems for the plant.
- ✓ Some plants require special planting techniques. Observe as required. Check label or ask the supplier.

HOT TIP:

Be careful not to over water as this can encourage a number of problems and cause serious damage to your plants. Check with your plant supplier or Landscaper for further instruction

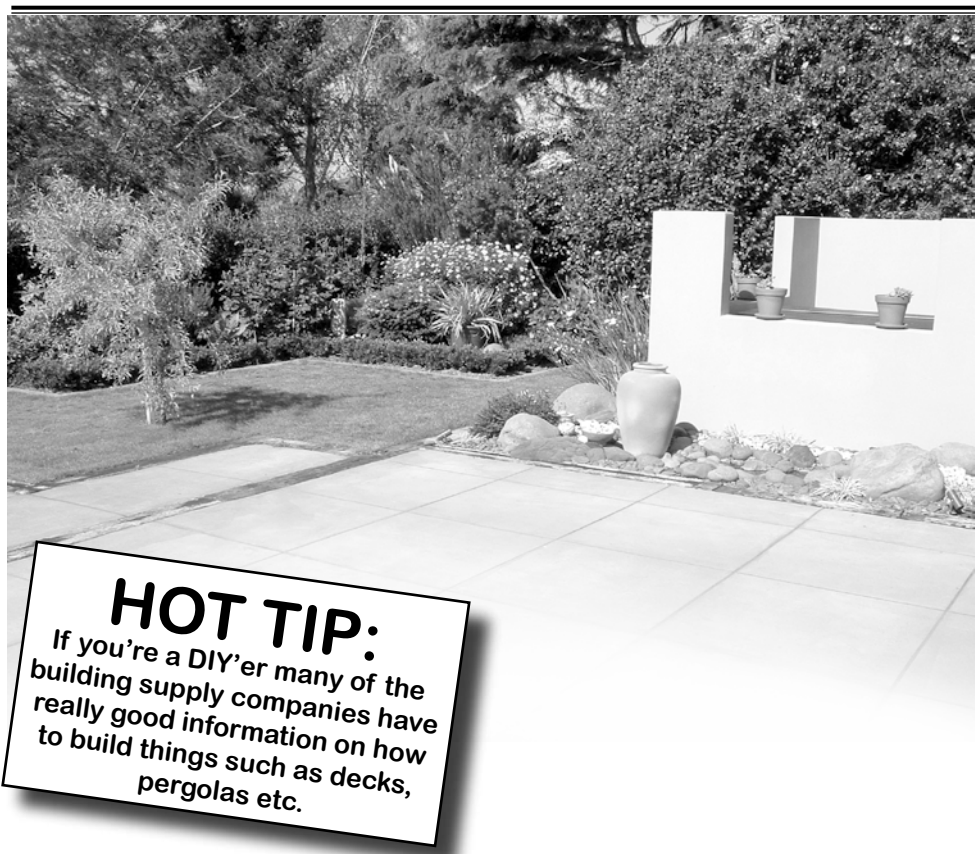
- ✓ You may wish to install provisions for lawn/garden irrigation. You do this now.

HOT TIP:

Often a combination of 2-3 different products can look very effective, however be careful not to over mix together

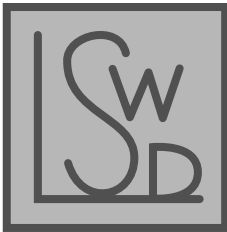
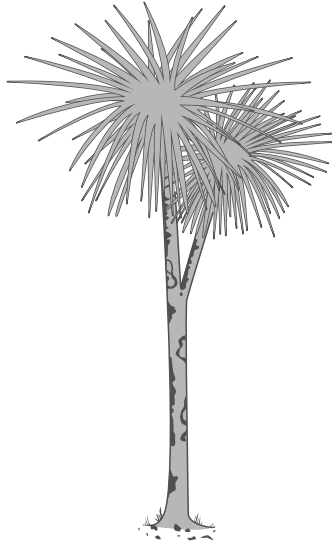
- ✓ Apply finishing product to garden as required such as bark, mulch, pebbles, crushed shell.
- ✓ Water plants well particularly for the first week during summer.
- ✓ Care for plants as per landscapers instructions.
- ✓ Last but not least sit back and enjoy your new landscape.

Extra resources...



For more information or ideas
for landscaping check
out my website.

www.sueslandscapes.co.nz



**Susan Warrington
Landscape Design**

www.sueslandscapes.co.nz