

Most people have an intuitive understanding of landscaping: plants, outdoor spaces and making yards more visually appealing are part of it. But this simplistic view does not do the field justice – landscaping involves design, horticulture, drainage engineering, hardscape construction, ecology planning and long-term maintenance plans all combined into one profession that serves both as art form, science and trade – sometimes all three within a single project!

Understanding what landscaping involves can change how you view your own outdoor space, engage with landscaping contractors, and assess costs/benefits of projects. Whether planning to renovate your garden, start a landscaping business, or are just curious to see how the industry operates this guide provides a full picture.

What Is Landscaping?

Landscaping refers to the practice of altering visible features of an area of land in order to enhance its aesthetic appeal or functional performance, or both. It involves planning, designing, installing, and ongoing maintenance of outdoor spaces which include plants, soil, water features, structures, surfaces or surfaces within these spaces.

Landscape architecture derives its name from the Dutch term, “landschap,” which refers to paintings depicting natural scenery. Land modification dates back to formal garden design traditions of 17th and 18th century Europe where shaping land to create pleasing outdoor environments was recognized as a profession. Today, landscaping encompasses everything from residential front yard planting and large-scale urban park design projects, lawn maintenance contracts to full scale site developments – and much more besides.

Landscaping differs from gardening in that gardening typically refers to cultivating plants for their own sake on an individual or small-scale level, while landscaping takes a broader view of outdoor environments as whole systems, taking into account how all its elements — plants, structures, water sources, lighting levels, grades and soil — interact with one another and with those using the space.

What Are the Steps Involved with Landscaping

Work?

Landscaping encompasses more activities than most people realize at first, generally divided into two main categories: softscape and hardscape.

Softscape

Softscape refers to all living, horticultural elements of a landscape design. This includes plants, trees, shrubs, ground covers, grasses, flowers, and any other growing materials that form part of its design. Softscape work involves:

- Plant selection should take into account climate, soil type, sun exposure and aesthetic intent.
- Preparation and amendment of soil for healthy root development.
- Planting trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, and ground covers.
- Install your lawn by seed, sod or other ground covers
- Design and Installation of Irrigation Systems to Support Plant Health
- Ongoing maintenance including pruning, fertilization, pest management and seasonal planting.

Softscape is an integral component of landscape architecture that adapts and evolves over time, shifting with each season and season change, needing continual maintenance to retain its intended appearance and function.

Hardscape

Hardscape (hard surfaces, built structures and engineered features) refers to all nonliving structural elements in a landscape that are nonliving in nature and non-living components that exist outside living organisms such as trees. It work typically includes:

- Paving and pathway construction with materials such as concrete, natural stone, pavers, gravel or brick.
- Retaining wall construction to manage grade changes and prevent erosion
- Deck and Patio Installation Solutions Available
- Garden wall and fence construction.
- Water feature design and installation services including ponds, fountains and waterfalls
- Outdoor Lighting installation.

- Design and installation of drainage system

Hardscape elements provide the framework within which softscape elements can be arranged. They define movement through space, create outdoor rooms, manage water and grade issues and grade accurately while offering durable surfaces necessary for outdoor living and use.

An effective landscaping project typically incorporates both softscape and hardscape elements working together, from patios with no surrounding planting to plant beds without defined edges or pathways, the relationship between hard and soft elements can often make or break the project. Good landscape design judgment will play a key role here.

Understanding Types of Landscaping Work

The landscaping industry serves a diverse selection of markets and projects. Gaining an understanding of its various categories helps shed light on what specializes in each contractor and where your project falls in its spectrum of services.

Residential Landscaping

Residential landscaping encompasses private homes from front yard curb appeal projects to backyard transformations. These represents the majority of projects in this market segment and may encompass everything from one-time garden design and installation contracts all the way through to ongoing lawn and garden maintenance agreements.

Residential landscaping encompasses an expansive spectrum of services and budget. Replanting front yards with new shrubs and mulched beds as part of residential landscaping is one example, while redesigning an entire property with new driveway, patio, outdoor kitchen, planting scheme and irrigation system is another. What defines residential landscaping most is when its client is an owner-occupier who lives within private residence boundaries.

Commercial Landscaping

Commercial landscaping serves businesses, institutions, and non-residential properties such as office parks, retail centers, hotels, hospitals, schools, and

apartment complexes. Office parks, retail centers, hotels, hospitals schools as well as apartment complexes often hire commercial landscaping services for projects with larger areas that involve formal maintenance contracts with greater emphasis placed on durability and low maintenance plant selection than typical residential projects.

Commercial landscaping contracts often combine installation of new landscapes with ongoing maintenance services. A commercial landscaping company might design and install grounds at a new office development before providing ongoing service contracts for their maintenance over multiple years.

Landscaping in Construction

What exactly is landscaping in construction? Landscape work refers to any work performed around a building as part of its development, such as final grading to create positive drainage away from it, installing permanent plantings and lawn areas, creating paths and driveways, or any other exterior site improvements that complete its overall development.

Landscape design is often listed as an individual line item or scope of work on construction contracts and should be installed near project completion and handover. Landscaping work often complements and works around earlier civil engineering work undertaken on site such as drainage systems and utility routing; landscaping must work around and complement these developments for successful results.

Landscaping in Agriculture

What is Landscape Gardening in Agriculture? Landscape gardening refers to the practice of designing and installing windbreaks, contour planting to minimize sloped field erosion, drainage ditching and retention pond construction, drainage ditch maintenance, as well as managing non-productive land areas around farm buildings and access routes to optimize productivity, manage water, prevent erosion, and enhance working environments at farms or agricultural properties.

Agricultural landscaping differs from residential or commercial work in that its main goal is more utilitarian; nonetheless it requires many of the same skills such as grading, drainage, planting and soil management. With greater understanding of how landscape health influences agricultural yield, its relevance has only grown

stronger over time.

Ecological and Restorative Landscaping

Ecological landscaping involves designing or renovating landscapes to promote biodiversity, native ecosystems, and environmental health. This may involve native plant restoration, the establishment of wildlife habitat, installation of rain gardens or bioswales as stormwater management mechanisms, remediation of disturbed or degraded land as well as remediation of disturbed or degraded sites.

Ecological landscaping has gained prominence as awareness of its environmental impacts has grown over time. Ecological landscaping's principles such as using native plants that support pollinators and wildlife in an area, choosing drought-resistant plants for reduced irrigation needs and managing stormwater through landscape level rather than engineered drainage systems are quickly moving from specialty practice into mainstream residential and commercial landscaping work.

The Importance of Landscaping

Landscaping is more than an aesthetic pursuit; its effects span functional, environmental, economic, and social dimensions that affect individual properties as well as larger communities.

Property Value

Well-executed landscaping consistently increases residential property values. Studies conducted within the real estate industry demonstrate how quality landscaping can add significant value to a home's market price. Curb appeal, or first visual impression of the property from street level, plays an enormous role in first impressions and buyers deciding to offer at or above asking price.

Environmental Benefits

Landscapes provide numerous environmental benefits. Trees and shrubs reduce urban heat island effects by shading surfaces that would otherwise absorb and radiate heat; plants absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen; established landscapes with deep-rooted plants reduce stormwater runoff by absorbing rainfall that would otherwise runoff impervious surfaces into drainage systems; they also offer refuge to birds, pollinators insects, and other wildlife that would find urban

environments hostile.

Functional Outdoor Living

Landscaping creates outdoor living areas that extend the usable living area of a home. A well-designed backyard with patio, shade planting and outdoor kitchen can add square footage of functional living space that most internal renovations cannot match per dollar spent – this functional value goes beyond aesthetics to include how much time a family actually spends outdoors, along with its quality.

Drainage and Erosion Control

Maintaining proper landscaping grading and planting practices are integral to managing water on and around a property. Without adequate slope, drainage features, and ground cover to absorb rainwater effectively, raindrops could pool against foundations, erode the soil beneath, and eventually cause structural damage over time. Landscaping that addresses drainage is no longer an optional luxury but an integral component of long-term property care and upkeep.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Access to green space and natural environments has long been associated with improved mental health and well-being. A well-maintained garden or outdoor space provides the opportunity for relaxation, physical activity, and connection with natural cycles that the built interior environment cannot replicate. Landscape gardening's importance extends far beyond mere statistics; rather, it enhances quality of life directly and personally in ways difficult to quantify but easy to appreciate experientially.

What Is a Landscaping Business?

Landscaping businesses provide landscaping services commercially for both the residential and commercial markets, or both. Ranging from sole operators offering lawn mowing and basic garden maintenance to large companies employing numerous staff who offer full design, installation, and maintenance services – the services offered can range anywhere from lawn mowing and basic garden upkeep to full design installations with full design plans, installations, maintenance programs, as well as full design work and installations with professional installation teams

delivering specialized designs suited for their locales.

The landscaping industry is an integral component of outdoor services economies. It encompasses numerous specialist subfields such as landscape architecture – which deals with large-scale land planning; landscape design for residential and commercial gardens; and landscape contracting which handles installation and maintenance work.

Start-up costs associated with entering the maintenance-oriented end of the market are relatively low; basic lawn care equipment, reliable transportation and the desire to work outside physically are enough. Moving into design-build work typically requires additional skills, equipment and potentially professional certification or licensing – such as irrigation installation, pesticide application or work involving structural elements like retaining walls or drainage systems.

Most landscaping businesses utilize a hybrid business model consisting of both project-based installation work and ongoing maintenance contracts as sources of predictable recurring revenue, offsetting seasonal variations in installation project income. Maintaining clientele for these ongoing contracts should be prioritized for financial stability.

Landscaping Near Me: What to Look for in a Landscaping Contractor

Finding a quality landscaping contractor requires more than simply searching nearby options; several criteria differentiate reliable landscapers from those who will disappoint.

Licensing and insurance: When hiring a professional landscaping contractor, make sure they carry general liability insurance as well as any necessary licenses in your state for performing this type of work. Before any works begin, ask to see proof of coverage as proof is often needed before any services commence.

Portfolio and references: Seek completed projects similar to what you are planning. Speaking with past clients can give insight into their experience with contractors; for instance, how they handled problems or whether the final result matched what had been proposed can reveal more than any website or social media page can.

Written proposals: Each landscaping project should begin with a written proposal outlining the scope, materials, timeline, and payment terms of their work. Verbal agreements or handshake deals lead to disputes that could have been avoided with proper documentation.

Plant knowledge: Contractors that demonstrate expertise when discussing plant selection based on specific site conditions such as soil type, sun exposure, drainage needs and local climate are more likely to demonstrate professional competence than operators who just install identical plants regardless of conditions.

For practical guidance on garden planning, outdoor improvement projects, and making the most of your exterior spaces, the [Garden & Outdoor section at Home Narratives](#) covers detailed advice on everything from planting design to hardscape construction.

The [National Association of Landscape Professionals](#) is the primary industry body for the landscaping trade in the United States, providing consumer resources for finding qualified contractors, understanding landscaping standards, and learning about sustainable landscape practices.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is landscaping in simple terms?

Landscaping can be defined as the practice of improving and maintaining outdoor spaces through planting, construction and design techniques. Landscaping encompasses anything done to a piece of land to make it look or function better – from mowing lawns and planting gardens, building patios or installing irrigation, or redesigning an entire property’s outdoor environment.

What is the difference between landscaping and gardening?

Gardening involves cultivating plants on an individual or small-scale, often at home or for pleasure, with plants themselves as the focus. Landscaping takes a broader view of the outdoor environment as an integrated system; taking into consideration how plants, structures, water sources, grade drainage, surfaces, grade drainage as well as grade drainage work together to create functional yet appealing spaces – some gardening can count as landscaping but it covers much more! All gardening can fall within this definition but as standalone undertaking it cannot compare.

What does a landscaping business do?

A landscaping business provides design, installation and maintenance services for outdoor spaces. Maintenance may involve tasks like lawn mowing, pruning and fertilizing while seasonal clean-up is performed; design-build work includes designing new gardens or outdoor living spaces to be constructed, installing planting hardscape, irrigation systems or lighting as part of an overall transformation of a property's outdoor environment - many landscaping firms provide both types of services.

Why is landscaping important?

Landscaping plays an integral role in several ways simultaneously: It can increase property values, enhance curb appeal, provide environmental benefits like stormwater absorption and carbon sequestration, as well as providing wildlife habitat. Furthermore, landscaping creates functional outdoor living space which extends usable area in your home, manage drainage/erosion issues that affect long-term structural health of property, contributes to mental wellbeing through accessing green space environments as well as contributes to quality of life through accessing nature environments.

What is the difference between landscaping in construction and regular landscaping?

Landscaping in construction refers to exterior site work performed as part of building development projects - such as grading, drainage, permanent planting and surface installation that complete a construction site. Regular residential or commercial landscaping usually refers to improving existing outdoor spaces rather than new construction sites - both fields share many similar technical skills - however construction landscaping generally operates within strict constraints and timelines of broader development projects and therefore must operate accordingly.

How do I find a good landscaping contractor near me?

Look for licensed and insured companies with verifiable portfolios of completed projects. Get references from previous clients directly. Request written proposals for any work you are considering doing; consider membership with professional organizations like the National Association of Landscape Professionals which require

adhering to professional standards; obtain at least three quotes for larger projects while considering both price and consultation quality as major criteria in your decision making.

Landscaping goes well beyond beautifying outdoor environments, with design intelligence combined with horticultural knowledge, engineering acumen, and physical craftsmanship coming together to craft environments that serve their function well while looking beautiful - making landscaping the cornerstone of making sound decisions about gardening, outdoor renovation projects or business opportunities alike. Understanding what constitutes landscaping will enable you to make better choices and decisions regarding its practice and in it.

What does your current outdoor space look like, and what one change would make the biggest impactful difference to how you use and enjoy it? This question often serves as the best starting point for any landscaping discussion.

Article written for [Home Narratives](#) — practical guidance for better living spaces.