



Transform Your Outdoors into Beautiful Living Space

Outdoor Planning...Simplified

By Nancy Moffett

You've seen them in magazines, on house tours and on TV—gorgeously landscaped gardens and yards with just the right mix of plants, water features, trees and living space. Seems impossible to achieve to the average homeowner. But, going from a sea of grass and boring shrubs to spectacular doesn't have to be an impossible dream. According to Joanne Kostecky of Joanne Kostecky Garden

Design, Inc., by following the steps below, you too can bring out the best in your outdoor space, design and budget.

Develop a Plan

"The most important thing is to start off with an overall plan," says Kostecky. "Determine how you want to use the space and what are the things you need."

Do you need hard surfaces, such as a patio or deck, for summertime dining and entertaining? More shade to block the summer sun or less to accommodate flowering plants? Grass for the kids to play on? Screening to block an undesirable view? An area where you can relax bug-free? All these elements need to be determined before you start.

continued on page 8

Establish a Time Frame & Budget

Re-designing your outdoor space is more than just a weekend project or plunking in a few new shrubs and flowers. It's really the equivalent of remodeling a room and can add just as much value to your property. "After you've developed an overall plan, the next step is to establish a preferred time-frame and budget for what you want to accomplish," explains Kostecky. "Is the work to be completed all at once, or be spread out over time?"

Determine Your Highest Priority

As a final step, Kostecky recommends that you prioritize your plan based on your most immediate needs or interests. Is it a shaded patio where you can relax on warm summer evenings or a desire for greater privacy? Is the storage shed for garden and lawn tools an immediate interest or are trees, shrubbery, and plantings of more importance? "By creating a conceptual plan, either on your own or with the help

Project Perspective

When you think about landscaping, remember this kind of project is similar to building or remodeling a room, both in cost and the skills required. There may be heavy equipment needed as well as labor involved. Fencing and shrubbery is similar in scope and cost to constructing walls and framework for a new room. Adding shade trees, walkways, flowerbeds, patios or decks are the equivalent of installing new ceilings and floors. And, it's normally spread over a much bigger space.

If you decide to work with a landscape professional, think of the cost and process as being the same as hiring an electrician, plumber or home remodeling firm for the inside of your home.

of a landscape professional, the end result will be of greater satisfaction."

With careful planning and follow-through, you can have an outdoor space that will give you years of pleasure while adding value and appeal to your property.

The Lehigh Valley Builders Association's roster includes landscape professionals who meet the Association's high professional standards. Call 610-432-4101 or visit www.lvba.org to find a firm that can help you with your outdoor projects. ■

Article information and images provided by:

Joanne Kostecky Garden Design, Inc.

Award winning designers and builders of distinctive landscapes.

610-530-8752

www.gardendesigninc.com

