

INSIDER TIPS FOR PLANNING YOUR GARDEN

Thinking of a garden?

Why not plan ahead by considering three initial stages of the design process: site analysis, program development and garden theme.

Go outside and look at your landscape. Consider the soil, climate, pedestrian circulation and sightlines. Decide what is to remain, what is to move and what is to be removed. Think about how your garden will look in all the seasons. Seasonal interest must be considered when designing gardens in the Greater Toronto Area. Create a list of the opportunities and constraints of your existing garden – what do you like, what needs improvement. Your first essential step in revealing the natural beauty of your property begins with site analysis.

A key question to ask yourself is who will be using your outdoor space and how will it be used? The majority of homeowners use their outdoor spaces for entertainment, recreation or relaxation. Others enjoy the physical work of getting their hands dirty. If you plan to entertain outside what will be the average number of guests? The answer to this question will determine the size of your dining area. Figure out what time of day you are most likely to use your garden. Lighting will be an essential consideration if you plan to use or view your garden at night. By adding lighting plant specimens, water features or sculptures can be artistically illuminated. Before you begin the design on paper, prepare a prioritized list of activities that would ideally suit your outdoor gardening space and lifestyle. We call this phase of the design process, program development.

While you are working on your program development incorporate a garden theme into

your landscape. This theme will create unity and harmony in your outdoor space. Seek inspiration from the existing architecture, the television gardening channel or borrowing gardening books from your local library. Themes such as a romantic garden, a feng shui inspired landscape or a more formal topiary garden are a handful of possible suggestions for you to explore. Your choice of garden theme is a reflection of your personal taste and makes a statement about you.

Garden architecture can play a key role in illustrating your unique garden theme. Architecture can be defined as exterior elements in the landscape with a permanent structure and presence. Some examples include: patios, steps, walls, walks, gates, or fences. Finding the right balance between architecture and planting is a vital component for a user friendly garden.

Before you create your dream garden, it is essential to determine how much maintenance time you are willing to designate for pruning, weeding, dividing, watering, amending the soil and composting. After all, you want your plants to thrive in your garden. Carefully consider your budget and project your estimated costs over the next five years.

Design your garden according to your needs and comfort level. By thinking about these design considerations and asking yourself key questions, your garden can enhance your living space. The design possibilities are infinite.

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