

Getting Started with a Landscape Design

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Cheryl Armstrong

If you've never tackled a landscape design before, you might be overwhelmed by all the choices you have to make. As with any project, the biggest challenge is knowing how to get started! A Landscape Design series will be offered by the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office to provide guidance to homeowners in designing or renovating their home landscapes.

If you've never tackled a landscape design before, you might be overwhelmed by all the choices you can make. The most important aspects of successful landscape planning happen long before the first planting hole is dug. A lot of careful observation and thoughtful planning go into creating a landscape that will be a functional and pleasing extension of your home.

So, where do you start if you want to do it yourself? Whether you are landscaping a newly built home or improving an existing landscape, you should consider attending the upcoming landscape design series offered by Galveston County Master Gardener Karen Lehr. Karen has a Master of Science degree in Landscape Architecture. The basic techniques of

landscaping today are not that much different from those our forefathers used. Still, technology and the age of communication are definitely changing the way we live, work and garden. I think more gardeners will become increasingly sophisticated and knowledgeable and will move beyond some of the traditional ideas about landscape design and maintenance. Outdoor living is



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becoming a primary focus. Our gardens are more often being looked at as an extension of our homes—an area to live in and use—rather than just a pretty group of plants to look at.

Designing private, intimate spaces into the home landscape is becoming more important as our fast-paced world creates an increasing need for places to relax and enjoy a little quiet time. Private outdoor living areas can be fashioned out of hedges and screens as outdoor garden rooms to give a sense of enclosure and separation from the world.

In addition, accessories that help personalize and enhance landscapes are becoming more popular and will continue to do so. Examples include wind chimes, sculptures and other art suitable for outdoor display, gazing globes, topiary, gazebos, arbors, decorative containers and other accents to individualize our outdoor spaces.

New garden designs are increasingly interactive. We crave gardens that appeal to all of our senses—sight, sound, smell, touch and even taste—with an emphasis on personal enjoyment and the therapeutic values of gardening. An example would be creating a garden that includes a variety of fragrant plants you remember from your childhood.

Water provides sparkling light, beautiful reflections and a most relaxing sound in the garden. Regardless of the garden's size, we are more and more frequently enhancing the composition by adding a water feature—such as a fountain, reflection pool, waterfall or water garden—that can range in size from a half barrel to a large

pond.

The “flower power” generation has brought to gardening a deeper understanding and appreciation of ecology and a respect for natural environments. Realizing the amount of water and energy our landscapes can use, gardeners are switching from plants that need frequent watering and maintenance to those that require less irrigation and maintenance once the plants have become established.

Overall, our concept of gardens and landscapes is becoming more personal, interactive and relaxed. Landscapes may still include formal elements, but large turf areas, monotonous pruned shrubs, clipped hedges, foundation plantings and precise annual beds are likely to become less common.

A more diverse palette of plants, both native and introduced, will be used in a manner that is more resource-efficient and lower in maintenance to create beautiful, functional landscapes that nurture both nature and people.

As with any project, the biggest hurdle is getting started. When the project is landscaping the home, the biggest problem oftentimes is knowing how to get started! Be sure to pre-register for the 3-part Landscape Design series taught by Master Gardener Karen Lehr.

The focus of her first class (on Tuesday, October 22, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.) will be on Analyzing your Landscape. The second class (on Tuesday, October 29, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.) will focus on Basic Design Principles. The third class (on Tuesday, November 5, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.) will focus on Advanced Design Principles.

While attendance at all three classes is not required, participants would best benefit by attending all three classes. All classes will be held at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park (4102-B Main Street) in La Marque. Pre-registration can be made by e-mail (GALV3@wt.net), telephone (281-534-3413, ext. 12) or by website (<http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>).

