

Dividing Your Landscape into “Use Areas”

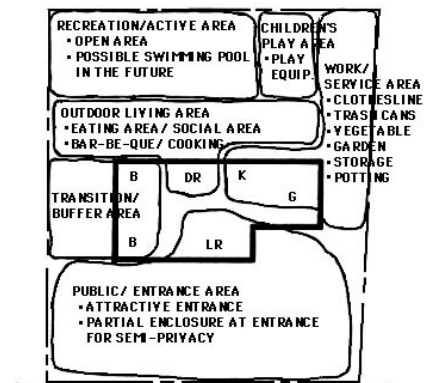
By Steve Chaney, CEA

“It may be argued that real beauty is neither in garden nor landscape, but in the relation of both to the individual, that what we are seeing is not only a scenic setting ... but a background for life,” remarked Sir George Sitwell.

Landscapes are more than looks, they reflect on the places where we live and tell us who we are and how we like to spend our lives. The most important part of a landscape is a point of view.

Some folks just want to relax in the yard after work; others expect a landscape to make a statement. The front yard (also the side yard if you live on a corner) is the most visible to neighbors and passersby. Most people want it to be at least neatly kept. The fellow that was taken to court for having a weedy lawn insisted that it was a wildflower garden, but even wildflowers can be in tidy borders.

While you are at the planning stage, divide the landscape into different use areas, considering the view from inside and from outside. You will probably want the front to be for public view, the back for private use, and the work area to stay out of sight from all angles. The public area should be made to fit somewhat into the scheme of the neighborhood, with the architecture of the house dominant and everything else visually secondary. Drives and parking ought to be directly accessible from walkways, which in turn should lead to a door – something people often forget, leaving visitors to guess how they should approach the house.



• DIAGRAM SPACE NEEDS •

The plants around the front should need little maintenance, with minimal pruning.



Basic landscapes have entirely too many evergreen shrubs, most of which demand pruning several times a season. At the corners place a shrub or shrubs that upon maturity will only reach about a third, no more than a half the height of the house, then accent the entrance with an unusual plant or unique accessory. A few low maintenance borders here and there will go

a long way toward filling any gaps left. Add a nice tree or group of trees no closer than 15 feet to help frame it and all the basics are done. Avoid the most common mistake homeowners often make of cluttering the front of your home with too many plants. The problem will only worsen with time as the plants mature. Hedges and fences both will often help hide the garbage cans, the old car, the tool shed, the woodpile, and the dog's yard. People frequently fail to consider such camouflage, but a simple wooden lattice on posts with a vine or two can go a long way toward concealing the work area and anything else that lacks aesthetic appeal.

The last big use area of the landscape is the private area, the patio or deck with its bird feeder, swing, grill, pool, sandbox, vegetable garden and everything else you enjoy. You probably have these things near a window (so that you can keep an eye on the kids and the flowers) and a door, through which guests and food may flow freely. You should be able to breathe easily, or even to rant and rave, in the privacy of your own backyard without wondering who is peeking in.



The private area should visually pull you outdoors when you view it through a door or window. As you gaze across the backyard in the wintertime, the birds should seem nearby as if they were in the kitchen or den. A small salad garden or bed for herbs or cut flowers should be handy and visible. The private area should be inviting and fun! Enjoy your planning this winter and harvest the benefits the rest of your life!

