



Contemplating your new home's *landscape*

IF YOU ARE PLANNING TO LANDSCAPE YOUR new property, the best time to start the process is straight after you purchase, according to landscape designer Pauline McGraw of McGraw Design Landscaping.

There are a lot of things to consider, and a designer can help you on many fronts – starting with a site inventory and analysis as soon as the new home reaches the fine grading stage of construction. Once your plan is finalized, a designer can also assist by recommending contractors to quote the job. Remember that having a landscape blueprint will enable you to phase the construction over a number of years, if necessary. Knowing that spring will be extremely busy, it is good to get a master plan completed by the previous autumn and your preferred contractor booked well in advance.

McGraw recommends you prepare for an initial landscape consultation by thinking about your lifestyle and activities. Before your appointment, assemble visual refer-

ences of features, colours and styles you like from books and magazines, and have a wish list ready and a budget in mind. These items will assist the consultant to create a plan specifically for your family.

Consider some of the up and coming trends being incorporated into landscaping for properties both big and small. Patios, decks and other sitting areas for front yards accented with outdoor art such as sculptures, statues, mirrors and rain chains are among those McGraw has created for her clients. Outdoor living space and garden “rooms” are still popular. McGraw also notes that since the advent of low maintenance pond and waterfall eco-systems which recycle clean water, water feature installations are making a comeback. Their easy care combined with lighting options and the ability to run during the winter makes them desirable landscaping features for both front and back yards.

“The inclusion of a variety of native plants for their hardiness and lower maintenance characteristics as well as their all season performance are an excellent choice for today’s landscapes,” says McGraw. She adds that “sustainability has gained momentum and is affecting all aspects of landscaping from water use, ecosystems, plant selection, garden design, green construction materials, proper irrigation systems and maintenance methods. Solar power heated salt water swimming pools are becoming mainstream. Green planting techniques such as simple ‘open basin,’ selecting hardy and drought tolerant plants and incorporating rain water collection and re-circulating chemical-free water features are all gaining traction.”

Sprout fountains, laser outdoor lighting and jazzy outdoor furnishings are being designed into Vegas-style landscaping for clients looking to make a big statement!

Landscaping is an important aesthetic and economic factor for homeowners while they live in their home and a positive feature when the time comes to sell. Large ticket investments such as trees, shrubs and other landscaping elements will add value over time. To see the completed designs by McGraw Design Landscaping for Geranium Homes, visit two model homes at Forest Trail Estates in Ballantrae, or visit geraniumhomes.com. For more information on Pauline McGraw, you can also visit landscape.mcgrawdesign.ca

This is the third in a series of articles on topics of interest to new-home buyers, authored by Sue Webb Smith, marketing director for Geranium Homes.