



Sustainable Landscapes

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Millions of dollars are spent each year designing, implementing, and maintaining urban landscapes. Unfortunately, long-term problems are caused when these processes are not carried out properly. Many of these problems can be avoided or reduced by utilizing sustainable landscape practices. A landscape developed with sustainable practices will improve the environment by conserving resources and reducing chemical applications. A sustainable landscape will also reduce labor inputs, making it easier and less expensive to implement and maintain.

The key to creating a sustainable landscape is understanding that the design process should be considered first whenever possible. There are five considerations in **designing a sustainable landscape**:

- Functional
- Maintainable
- Environmentally Sound
- Visually Pleasing
- Cost Effective

With a sustainable landscape approach, the visually pleasing and cost effectiveness considerations should be the last ones evaluated. This in no way diminishes the importance of a "good looking" or cost effective landscape, but challenges the designer to create beauty from a sustainable approach.

Keeping these considerations in mind, a **base plan** incorporates information about the site gathered from:

- *Interviews* with the client, designer, and/or owner
- *Site survey* based on an evaluation of the property
- *Site analysis* that evaluates challenges and potential benefits
- *Plot plan* drawn to scale showing key features of the lot
- *Site plan* showing any updates to the original plot plan
- *Structure and utility blueprints*

Key strategies for maintaining and managing sustainable home landscapes include:

- Composting (home, community)
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Managing/saving water (rain barrels, rain gardens)
- Mulching
- Soil testing

SOURCES:

University of Minnesota Extension, <http://www.sustland.umn.edu/>
Minnesota Department of Agriculture