

BY ALAN JACKSON  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT



Don't underestimate the benefit of hiring a professional for your outdoor project; a landscape architect will make sure your yard looks as great as (or better than) your house.

# Master Planning for your exterior

**H**iring a landscape architect on the front end of your home project will provide far more than a discussion about plants. You will soon find that a landscape architect can contribute to the overall curb appeal of your entire exterior from topography to driveways, hardscapes and more. They look at your new home building or renovation planning from a completely different view.

A landscape architect can be very useful in assessing the lot and helping your architect determine the best location to place the home. Additionally, landscape architects can assist with decisions on the size and scope of the home landscape design. Their job is to create a proper plan that includes all aspects of the landscaping. They discuss goals, materials, layout, style, plants, maintenance, hardscapes, turf conditions, tree health, drainage and more. Working with a professional can help prioritize these items and assist in the creation of a master plan.



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As with a home architect, good communication is key to getting the yard you desire. The landscape architect will make suggestions based on the lay of your land, shading, and types of plants that grow well in your particular soil, but don't be shy about expressing your personal preferences. For example, you may lean towards a tropical look, or you may prefer a more natural, woody approach. Your landscape architect can tell you what will work and what won't.



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A landscape architect not only provides knowledge about types of plants and where to put them, but he or she can also help create interesting spaces with hardscape. The landscape architect will be able to visualize your outdoor space and determine what features of your property can be enhanced with both plants and textured surfaces.



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### MASTER PLANNING FOR YOUR LANDSCAPE IS IMPERATIVE

Planning is the most crucial stage before building. A landscape architect is trained to connect with the homeowner and the architect on their vision for the home. They will strive to provide solutions for land use that integrally meet the vision in the outside environment. Often we will hear from a homeowner, “we’ve always wanted a property like this.” Analyzing good views in and out of the property, determining how the home will fit on the site, making sure there is no harm to existing trees and verifying drainage during building are a few examples of their perspective. Existing conditions at a property or home can affect everything. They look at the style of architecture, the way you come and go from the site by car and foot paths, the style of the driveway, existing trees, and drainage. They strive to tweak a very good plan with contributions to curb appeal.

Drainage is huge. A landscape architect can assess how water should move off site. Or, perhaps the water can be collected on site and create a feature. He looks at the grading for your property. Do you need a higher or lower grade, do you need a retaining wall? He may see that an existing retaining wall requires maintenance or needs to be moved. He can make suggestions to create a retaining wall subordinate by utilizing unique materials that compliment the home – brick columns or oyster shell stucco.



## When You're Under Construction

A good landscape architectural firm can still help. It's not too late. Often a firm may be called in after construction is under way or near completion. They can usually take care of many things outside of the property during construction and after construction without affecting what's going on inside the building. Typically, you have to stop things inside if you are changing something. This is not necessarily the case with landscape needs.

### **CURB APPEAL – PLANTS, FLOWERS, HARDSCAPES**

After all, it's the first view of your dream home! The curb appeal should be planned, budgeted and created with a professional to compliment your dream home. For example, the landscape may affect the color – the paint of the house or a big specimen tree may be in a spot where you wanted a large window positioned.

Another factor is the community you chose to reside in. Whether it's Sea Pines, Palmetto Bluff, Bray's Island or another area, there may be strict or suggested guidelines to your landscaping to be followed.

People move here from all over the country and other countries with preconceived ideas of what they want in their yard. Because of the varying environmental conditions in the lowcountry, determining the best plants to grow in your yard and how to grow them properly will be a crucial decision to make with a landscape architect. For example, a property owner may want a beautiful rose garden. Roses grow stupendously in Savannah and Augusta, but don't do well here due to the conditions of this barrier island – bugs and funguses wreak havoc on ornamental plants.

Often, people want something native and low maintenance. A landscape architect can make recommendations and take a small list of only five species for your property, but use it in different ways to give the effect of more diversity than you actually have!

“With our extensive working knowledge of plant material and irrigation, we can assess and design your landscape and effectively determine what is best suited for your lifestyle and budget,” stated Alan Jackson. “We are sort of like a coach to help you get what you actually want.”

Be cost effective and maximize the look and feel of your home's exterior by hiring a landscape architect as part of your design team. **LCA**