

Landscape Design is Your Best Home Improvement Investment

As an investment, landscaping can increase the value of your property by as much as 20 percent—if it is done well.

This Old House
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Spending 5 percent of the total value of your home on landscaping, and doing it wisely, you can add 15 percent or more to the value of your home.

According to a joint study by Clemson University and the University of Maryland, potential home buyers will pay up to 11.3 percent above the asking price for homes with thoughtfully-designed landscaping.

Mid-Valley
Sunday
(Corvallis, OR)
April 13, 2003

Baltimore
Sun
April 20,
2003

Homes with nice landscaping are likely to see sale prices that are 4 percent to 5 percent higher compared to similar properties in the neighborhood, according to the Guide for Plant Appraisal, published by the International Society of Arboriculture. And homes with landscapes that are not as nice as others in the neighborhood could see sales prices that are 8 percent to 10 percent lower.

Eighty-four percent of the real estate agents interviewed for the study said a house with trees would be as much as 20 percent more salable than a house without trees.

According to Money magazine (May 2003), spending on landscape design and installation has more than tripled in the past five years, hitting \$14.3 billion in 2002. And no wonder—it offers the best return on investment of any home improvement you can make. Many savvy homeowners are hiring landscape architects to help them realize their dreams. Here are some tips to help you make an educated choice: Think about what you want and how you will use your landscape. Formal entertaining, herb gardens, and children's playgrounds are all possibilities. Don't limit yourself to plants and trees; maybe you would like a fence, a fountain, a deck, a patio, or other outdoor element.

+ Make a realistic budget. One rule of thumb is to invest 5 to 10 percent of your house's worth. If this

seems steep, consider that appropriate landscape improvements are estimated to return 100 to 200 percent of their cost when a house is sold.

+ Look at books and magazines for ideas and start a file of plants, trees, gardens, yards, pools, patios, decks, fences, etc., that you like—or dislike—to show your landscape architect. This will help you communicate what you want to achieve—or avoid.

+ To find residential landscape architects in your area, go to [Firm Finder](#). Credentials are important. Landscape architects are licensed to practice in 47 states and must pass a rigorous exam. Members of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) have met their membership requirements and keep up with the latest technology and trends through ASLA publications and continuing education programs.

+ Interview a few landscape architects and ask for references. A good designer will walk around the home and ask a lot of questions about your lifestyle, what you want to accomplish, and your budget. They will not hesitate to provide references for you to call or to answer questions you may have about their services and fees.

+ Ask about maintenance. Some homeowners enjoy working in their yards and gardens, some hire a service to do it, and others don't want to bother with it at all. Be sure to let your landscape architect know how you feel about the upkeep of your investment.

Source: <http://www.asla.org/residentialinfo/>
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