

# LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND INSTALLATION

## Lesson 19: LANDSCAPE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Script to Narrate the PowerPoint, 19PowerPointPrinc.ppt  
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PowerPoint Slide 2: Title Slide, "Design Principles"

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PowerPoint Slide 3:  
Landscape Design Principles

- Unity
- Scale
- Balance
- Rhythm
- Simplicity
- Accent
- Repetition
- Harmony
- Definition of Spaces, Accents and Transitions
- Dominance, Contrast, and Others

There are no hard and fast rules for landscaping design since each plan is a unique creation. Landscaping, like all art forms, is based on certain principles of design.

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PowerPoint Slide 3: garden photo showing unity  
Text, "Unity"

Unity may be the most important goal for good design. A garden with too many ideas expressed in a limited area lacks unity. Too many showy plants or too many accessories on the lawn would claim more attention than the house itself. Using too many accent plants with contrasting textures, form, or color violates the principles of unity. In order to achieve unity it is necessary to group or arrange different parts of the design to appear as a single unit. The design should be a pleasant picture from every angle.

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PowerPoint Slide 4: garden photo showing scale  
Text, "Scale"

Scale refers to the proportion between two sets of dimensions. Knowing the eventual or mature size of a plant is critical when locating it near a building. Plants that grow too large will overwhelm a building. Small plantings around a large building can be similarly inappropriate. It is essential, therefore, to know the final size of a particular plant before using it in a landscape. Both the mature height and spread of a plant should be considered.

Scale should be relative to the site elements and the people who will live in and use the designed landscape.

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PowerPoint Slide 5: garden photo showing balance  
Text, "Balance - Symmetrical"

Balance in landscaping refers to an aesthetically pleasing integration of elements. It is a sense of one part being of equal visual weight or mass to another. There are two types of balance, symmetrical and asymmetrical. Symmetrical balance is formal balance. It is the creation of an axis with everything on one side being duplicated or mirrored on the other side.

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PowerPoint Slide 6: garden photo showing balance  
Text, "Balance - Asymmetrical"

Asymmetrical balance is balance that is achieved by using different objects to achieve equilibrium. For example, if there is a very large object on one side of a seesaw, it can be counterbalanced by using many objects of a smaller size on the other side of the seesaw or one object of equal size. In each instance, balance is achieved. This applies to landscaping when there is a large existing tree or shrub. To achieve visual equilibrium, a grouping or cluster of smaller plants is used to counterbalance the large existing plant. Balance may also be achieved through the use of color and texture.

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PowerPoint Slide 7: garden photo showing rhythm  
Text, "Unity"

Unity attracts and holds attention. It organizes view into orderly groups with emphasis.

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PowerPoint Slide 8: garden photo showing rhythm  
Text, "Rhythm"

Rhythm is a repetition of elements that direct the eye through the design. Rhythm results only when the elements appear in regular measures and in a definite direction. Rhythm can be expressed in color or texture as well as form.

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PowerPoint Slide 9: garden photo showing simplicity  
Text, "Simplicity"

Every square foot of landscape does not have to have something in it. Such objects as bird baths and plastic yellow daisies are sometimes overused in the landscape. There is a design concept expressed as "less is more." This statement is especially true regarding landscape design. Keep the landscape simple and it will look its best. Avoid cluttering the yard with unnecessary objects. This includes plant material, statuary, and miscellaneous objects. When too many extras are introduced the yard takes on a messy appearance. Use statuary or specimen plants with discretion. The simplest landscapes are often the most attractive. Remember, create spaces, don't fill them up.

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Time Check: PowerPoint half-way mark.

You should be about 10 minutes into this presentation.

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PowerPoint Slide 10: garden photo showing accent  
Text, "Accent"

Accent, also referred to as dominance, focalization, or climax, is important in the total picture. Without accent a design may be dull, static or uninteresting. Various parts, if skillfully organized, will lead the eye towards the focal point. This may be a garden accessory, plant specimen, plant composition or water in some form. Emphasis may also be obtained through use of contrasting texture, color or form, or by highlighting portions of a plant composition with garden lights.

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PowerPoint Slide 11: garden photo showing repetition  
Text, "Repetition"

Do not confuse repetition in the landscape with monotony. A row of sheared hedges lined up in front and down the side of a home is not repetition, it is monotony.

Repetition is something more subtle. An example is the use of curves in the landscape design. Curves may begin in bed lines in the front yard, continue in the side yard, and be picked up once more in the backyard. Alternatively, the repeated use of right angles on a grid design can successfully be used to achieve unity in the landscape. By subtly repeating such design elements as bed lines in the yard, one can achieve a continuity or flow in the entire landscape.

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PowerPoint Slide 12: garden photo showing harmony  
Text, "Harmony"

Harmony is achieved through an aesthetic arrangement of parts. There should be an agreement among the parts of a design to provide an effect of unity, or a pleasing whole. Like the musical notes in a harmonious composition, the plants should appear to belong with each other.

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PowerPoint Slide 13: garden photo related to the definition of spaces within the landscape and transition  
Text, "Definition of Spaces, Accents, and Transitions"

An easy method of combining plant and architectural characteristics is the consideration of space dividers, accents and transitions. These three elements are present in all successful landscape compositions.

Space dividers define or give privacy to spaces, create the background for outdoor living activities, and create dominance. Space dividers can be made up of fences, walls, plants as hedges or plants as borders. Space dividers must have height, must be arranged in groups that border spaces (open lawn or patio area), and must contain the most visually uniform characteristics in the composition.

Transitions form the connecting link between the space dividers and accents, or between the house and the land. To harmonize these elements, the transitions must be composed of characteristics that are found in both the space dividers and accents.

Accents, which should be in the minority of the composition, create interest by contrasting characteristics with the space dividers. Like sculpture, they may be displayed in two ways; 1) hidden in niches within the space dividers, or 2) standing free within the room created by the space dividers. In any design, only one of the two methods should be employed, or visual confusion may result.

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PowerPoint Slide 14: garden photo showing dominance and contrast  
Text, "Dominance and Contrast"

In any composition, a majority of dominant or repeated characteristics are accented by a minority of contrasting characteristics.

For a garden in which a viewer spends little time, the magnitude of contrast between the dominant characteristics and accents is very strong. Gardens of this type include entrance courts, street side foundation plantings, entrances to public buildings or plantings seen from the highway. The magnitude of contrast refers to the degree of change between visual characteristics such as plant type, height, form, color and texture. Generally, the volume of dominant characteristics to contrasting features should be about 80-20 or 90-10 percent. Gardens of this type take on a bold, architectural affect as in many of the contemporary California gardens. The effect can be grasped and understood at a glance.

For a garden in which a great deal of time is spent, such as viewing garden, a private garden off a study, or a dining garden, the ratio of dominance to contrast should be about 70-30 percent. The contrast can be rhythmically placed instead of being concentrated in one area. This type of garden would be appropriate for relaxation and meditation. It often takes on a Japanese effect, which is conducive to contemplative study needed to grasp the essence of the garden.

In no case should the ratio of dominance to contrast drop to 55-45 percent, for at this point dominance becomes lost and visual confusion results.

Contrast can be achieved through the type, form, and height of plant material:

- Type, e.g. contrasting evergreen with deciduous plants.
- Form, e.g. contrasting the pyramidal shape of a spruce with a rounded dogwood.
- Height, e.g. contrasting a tall hemlock with a dwarf Japanese maple.

These are just a few of the basic principles of design; there are others.