

Landscaping can make a difference

Stately trees, well-pruned shrubs and flowering bushes are effective landscaping tools that can greatly enhance the appearance and value of any home.

In addition to providing a decorative touch, they also fulfil functional purposes by providing shade and privacy.

Landscaping can be as complex or as simple as you wish, but simpler is generally better.

A well-landscaped property does not always require a great deal of maintenance. The amount of upkeep depends on the types of materials you use. For instance, gravel and wood chips are very popular mulch materials because they help keep the weeds at bay and provide an attractive "floor" for shrub beds.

Talk to your local gardening centre or a landscaping professional to see what types of plants and trees would be best for your soil type and needs. You may also want to consult a landscape architect and landscaping contractors, depending on the size of your job.

There are also many resource books available in bookstores and libraries that you may want to consult. The photographs in these books present many innovative ideas that may be just right for your particular situation. You should also take photographs of landscaping that you like and clip any helpful articles and pictures from newspapers for future reference.

Realize too, that you don't have to landscape the entire property at once; it can be done in stages over the course of a few years.

But no matter how big or small your particular project might be, take the time to plan it effectively before going off on a buying spree at your local garden centre.

Before putting your plans to paper, take a walk around your property several times and observe it from different angles. Decide what areas you want to highlight and what types of things you want to camouflage. For instance, you may want to enhance your patio or sun-deck, but you may want to conceal your house foundations with some extra greenery. You may also want to compensate for a sloping yard by installing some terracing.

You should also check your property for drainage. Ideally, your yard should slope away from your house; there should be two or three feet of fall for every 100 feet of horizontal land. If you do not have adequate drainage, you may have to install a drainage system.

When you begin planning your landscaping scheme, keep in mind that trees and bushes don't grow to their full proportions overnight. Envision how your property will look in future years and take this growth factor into account when determining the space you allot for each item. For instance, if you have a tiny lot, you probably won't want too many large bushes and trees.

After you've carefully thought everything over, put your ideas down on paper. Work from a base plan which outlines all your existing conditions. Then lay some tracing paper over your base plan and draw in your rough plans.

It's also important to consult with your family to make sure you consider everyone's needs and expectations when formulating a plan. Also make sure you take existing features like walkways, decks and patios into account.

Now is the time to examine all possible variables, so redraft your drawings as often as you want before settling on the final concept. Your final drawing should consist of a working drawing which outlines your plans in great detail.

If the work is fairly extensive, or if you don't have the time to do it yourself, you may want to contract the job out to a landscape contractor.

Getting Ready

Once you've determined what your design is and what types of plants you're going to use, make all the necessary preparations before buying your trees and shrubs.

Clean the area that is to be landscaped and remove or transplant any trees or shrubs to accommodate your design plan (in some municipalities you may need a permit to remove trees). To mark the sites of the new flower and shrub beds, form an outline with a garden hose, then coat it with spray paint for a permanent and gently roll it up. Keep it in a shady location until you're ready to re-use or replace some of it; otherwise, it can be composted or discarded.

Check the Layout

It's a good idea to lay out your trees and plants in their respective locations before planting them, to see how they will actually look.

This is also a good way to double check your spacing to ensure you have enough room for everything to spread with future growth. Plant the biggest items first, then follow with smaller shrubs and perennials. Always handle the rootballs with care.

Once your planting is complete, you may want to add edging to keep the edges of the bed uniform. Landscape fabric can also be applied to keep down weeds, and mulch can

be applied on top of it.

A carefully landscaped yard will give you years of pleasure.

□ This article is provided by local realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

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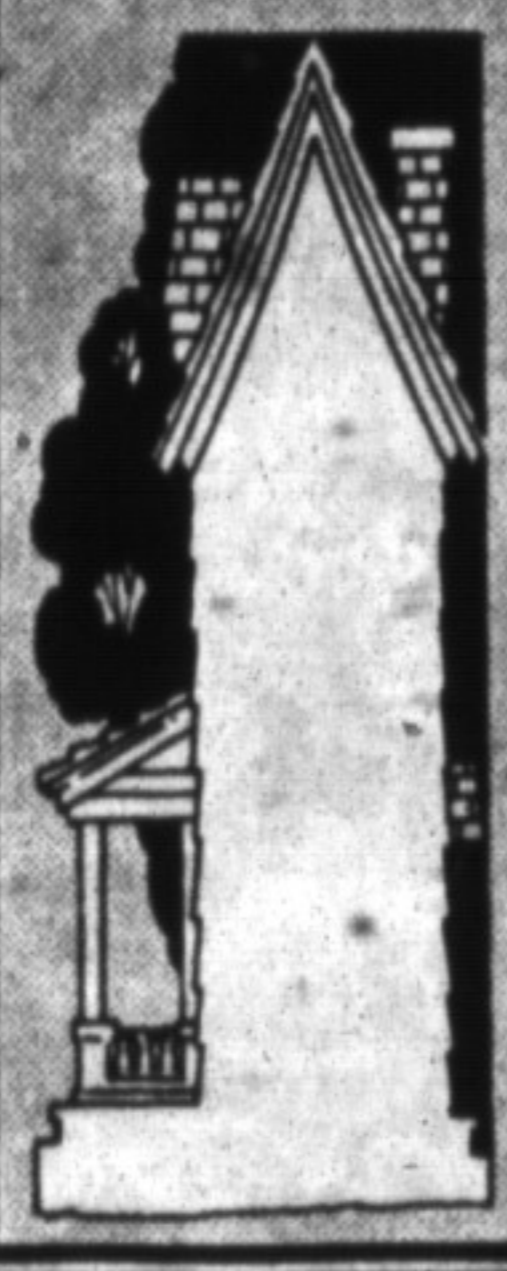


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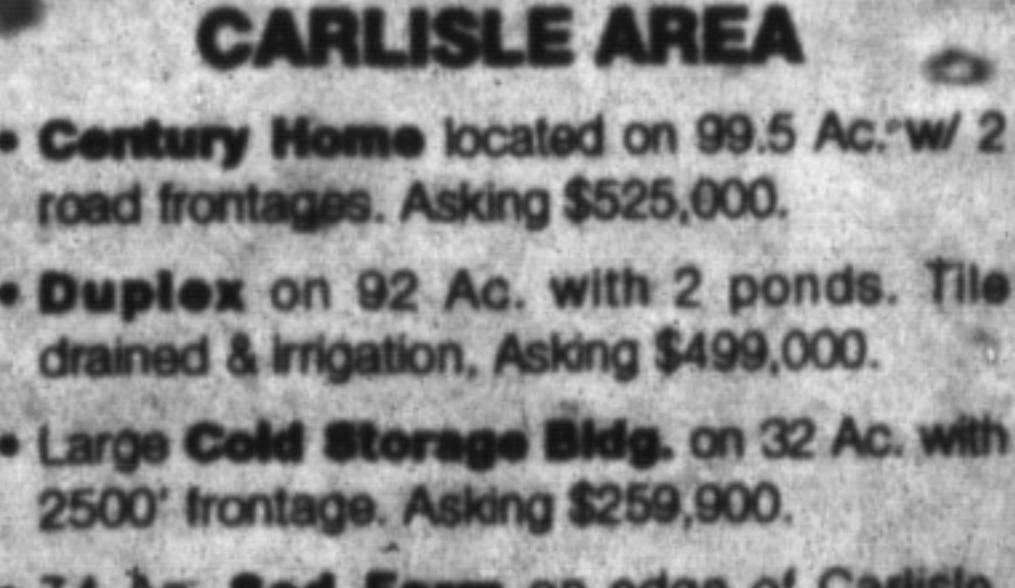
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