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# THE GARDEN CONTINUUM'S 10 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A SPECTACULAR LANDSCAPE

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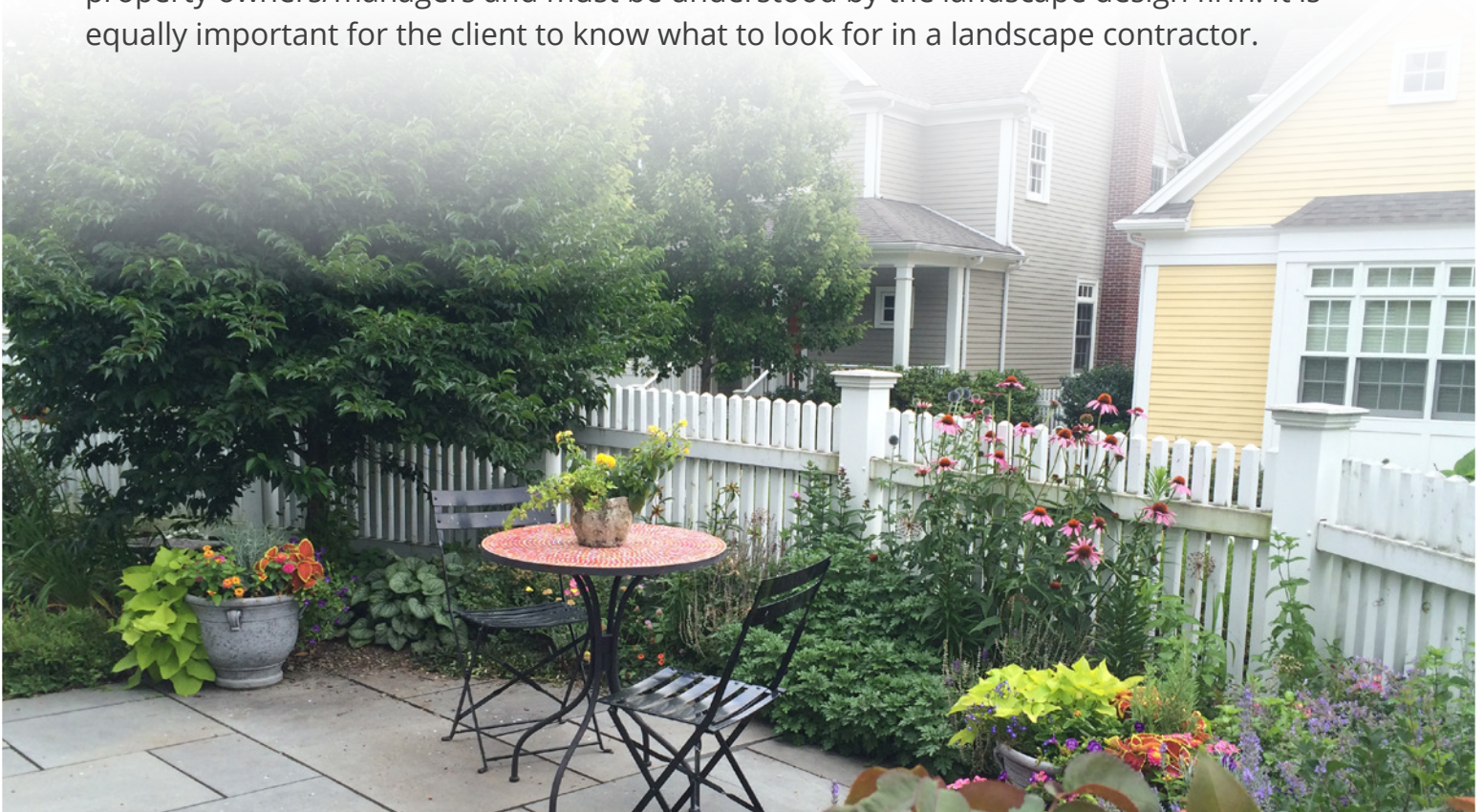


## INTRODUCTION

Landscape design and development is an undertaking that both integrates and transcends creativity and functionality. The creative side is often deeply personal and, done correctly, is unique to the owner and the property. The functional side, especially for commercial properties and environmental projects, needs to consider the interrelationship of plants, geography, and features and the impact the project may have on natural resources.

Property owners or managers may have a general idea of landscaping possibilities and what they'd like the final project outcome to accomplish – whether it's the homeowner's desire to be outside more, or the commercial property owner's need to attract and keep tenants, or the government official or private property owner's need to modify a piece of land, while ensuring all environmental requirements are successfully met. The common challenge they all face is finding a landscape design firm that can successfully balance the creative and functional aspects of a project and deliver a solution that is uniquely attractive, functional, and sustainable.

Thoughtful, intelligent landscape development involves understanding, designing, and creating landscape features that reflect the preferences of the owners, the activities of the users (who may or may not be the owners) and the rules and regulations governing the property. These considerations can vary widely among the three major categories of property owners/managers and must be understood by the landscape design firm. It is equally important for the client to know what to look for in a landscape contractor.



## Homeowners



You want your landscape to not only serve a specific function or set of functions, such as adding recreational space, increasing beauty, improving privacy – you also want it to thrive and evolve as your lifestyle and needs evolve. A landscape – like you and your family – is not static. It needs to look and function well this year and ten years from now in all four seasons. It needs to be a part of a larger eco-system, which you are a part of.

## Commercial property owners



Your needs and requirements may differ greatly depending on the type and function of your property – professional office building, retail shopping area, residential property, open campus space, even industrial complex. The image created by your landscape is important to your business or organization and how the public perceives it. It can make the difference in enticing customers to linger and shop; attracting new residents to live in a place that's beautiful and serene; and keeping tenants happy with entries and parking areas that say “welcome, we’re happy to have you here.”

## Environmental project managers



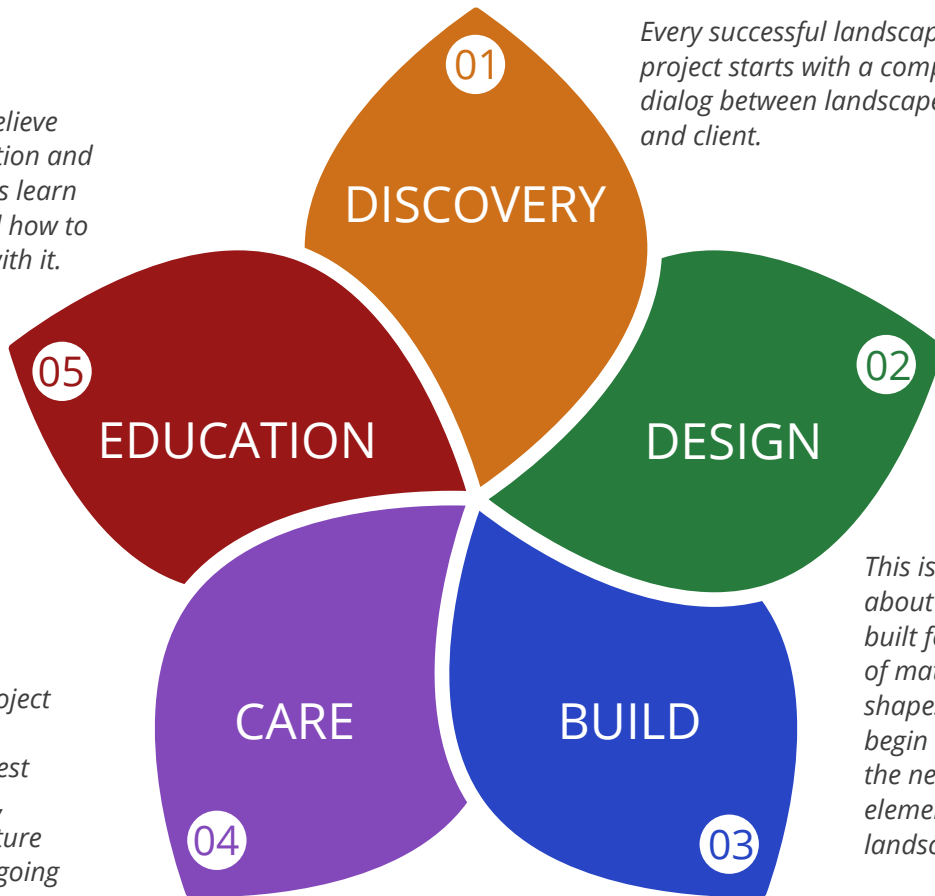
Meeting all rules and regulations while minimizing the natural and environmental impact of the landscape project is paramount. While traditional landscapers and civil engineers think mainly in terms of functionality with little consideration for aesthetics and form, a good landscape designer thinks “outside the box” to develop a creative solution that aligns with the native eco-system, meets regulatory and aesthetic needs while working closely with conservation commissions to get projects approved.



With all this in mind, let's take a look at the **10 essential elements of a spectacular landscape**. You may be surprised to learn that they are not "things." Instead, they are processes, methodologies, and activities that contribute to creating the landscape of your dreams – what we call a "Life-Scape™." These key elements can be broken into five major categories: discovery, design, build, care, and education.

*At the Garden Continuum, we believe strongly in education and helping our clients learn about nature and how to live in harmony with it.*

*Once a landscape project is completed, it's not really finished. The best landscapes are living, evolving things of nature and as such need ongoing care and maintenance – that's just a fact of life.*



*Every successful landscaping project starts with a comprehensive dialog between landscape designer and client.*

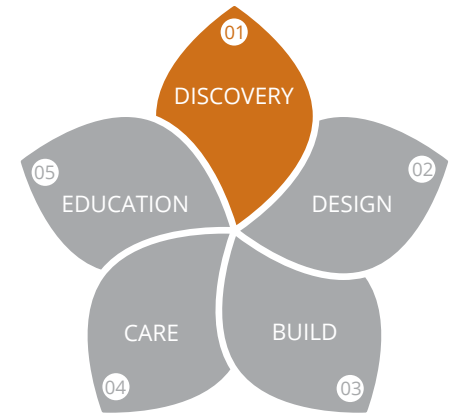
*This is the step where concepts about landscaped rooms, built features, all manner of materials, plants, colors, shapes, textures, and aromas begin to take shape through the next set of essential elements for your spectacular landscape.*

*With the first two stages successfully completed, it's time to start building.*



# 01 DISCOVERY

Every successful landscaping project starts with a comprehensive dialog between landscape designer and client. This accomplishes several things that form the foundation of the project.



## 1. Define project direction

This helps focus the project in a positive way. Often property owners undertake landscape projects because they have a feeling that something is “lacking” with their property, but don’t know how to describe it. This vague but undefined sense of a problem that needs to be fixed can lead to an unfocused and solution in which the property owner starts buying and installing products without a specific purpose or direction. For example, a homeowner may decide they don’t have enough privacy, so they buy several shrubs and plant them to create a shield from their neighbors. Without giving much thought to the future of this solution, the shrubs may not be the right answer -- they may not be appropriate for the location. They may ultimately create privacy, but then become so large they block all the sunlight, creating a new problem.

This type of landscaping is what we call “feature-scaping.” It adds features to the property without proper consideration of their function or future impacts. The solution may address the core problem and then inadvertently create a new one. Or worse, the core problem isn’t solved, and the money is simply wasted right out of the gate. The first step is to understand what the project needs to accomplish in the short term, how to sustain that solution for the long term, and the best way go about getting both.

## 2. Demystify the process

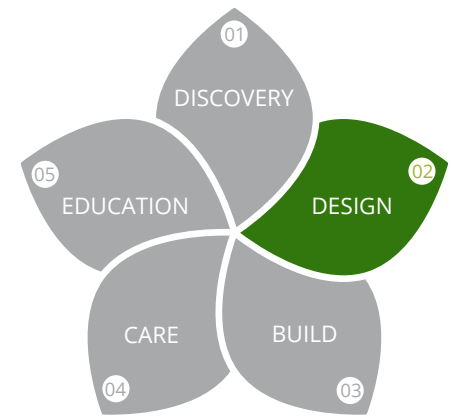
Knowing what to expect helps you, the client, understand how to proceed properly with a landscape project. Along with defining the project, it takes out the guesswork and clarifies the order and timing of each step of the project. Most important, it helps you understand the best way to invest your money, and how specific features will affect the overall project and the impact they will have when implemented now and over time.

We are now in a position to begin the actual project, starting with the design phase.



## 02 DESIGN

This is the step where concepts about landscaped rooms, built features, all manner of materials, plants, colors, shapes, textures, and aromas begin to take shape through the next set of essential elements for your spectacular landscape design.



### 3. Detail owner/user wants and needs

This phase enables the landscape designer to dig deeper into the specifics of what you'd like to include in the design based on personal preferences. It's the opportunity to explore the dynamics of how the landscaping should look and function for you. For example:

- What will the space be used for?
- Who will be the primary users?
- When will the space be used?
- Will pets be present and active in the space?
- What plant or materials preferences are there?
- Who will care for this space?

### 4. Understand what the property can accept

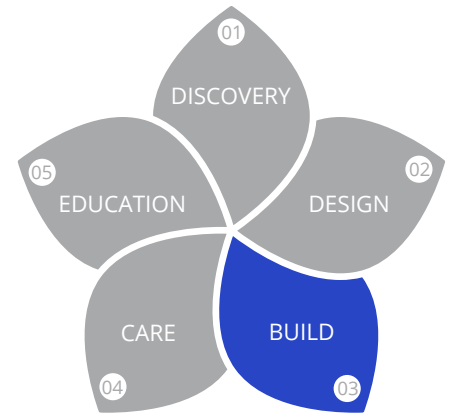
Often people have unrealistic expectations about what kind of landscape can be built on their land. Drainage, elevation, soil composition, and boundaries – to name a few factors -- may limit or not allow certain amenities, such as water features or a pool and even particular plant choices. To make good design decisions, it is beneficial to understand your property in relationship to your neighbor's – the boundaries (property lines). Understanding the exposures to sun and wind – the cold sides versus hot sides of the property – will help you choose plants wisely. Being clear on state and town regulations as related to historic districts, conservation/wetland jurisdictions, endangered and invasive species would save you from costly mistakes.

### 5. Find a solution that fits both people and property

This final, crucial stage needs the adept hand of a landscape designer/developer with the expertise and experience to help steer you, the client, in the right direction to ensure you are totally satisfied with your efforts. The designer ideally has a broad background in landscape design and development and can draw upon his or her knowledge of many disciplines such as horticulture, ecology, construction, and engineering to determine what the property will allow and what will work best for the client and the land. The result will be a landscape solution that's wholly suited to the property and harmoniously integrates natural elements, built features, and human activities.

## 03 BUILD

With the first two stages successfully completed, it's time to start building. At first blush, that might sound like it's time to start digging things up and moving things around. Quite the opposite is true. The first goal of professional landscape development is to *protect* and *preserve*. Landscapes are part of the natural environment and highly sensitive to disturbance. Protecting areas not being worked in or on is important. A professional landscape developer will carefully consider the best ways to avoid unnecessarily disturbing the land, the property owner, and daily activities. This involves identifying appropriate areas to stage equipment and mobilize work activities to minimize disruption and avoid damage to peripheral areas of land and limit impeding the use of the rest of the property.



### *6. Employ Best Management Practices (BMP) to ensure quality construction*

There are BMPs that cover every aspect of landscape development and establish a level of performance that professional landscape developers are expected to meet. The very best developers will not just meet, but exceed best practices, often with advanced certifications and education that provide them with greater knowledge and broader skill sets than your average developer, and far beyond those of a typical landscaper.

### *7. The best landscape designs are “living documents”*

That means that the best landscape designs are ones that are flexible and can take advantage of opportunities that arise during the build phase that could enhance a project. It helps to remember that designs are two dimensional, but actual landscapes are three dimensional, and once construction is underway, discoveries are often made about how specific elements work in three-dimensional space, inspiring changes to the





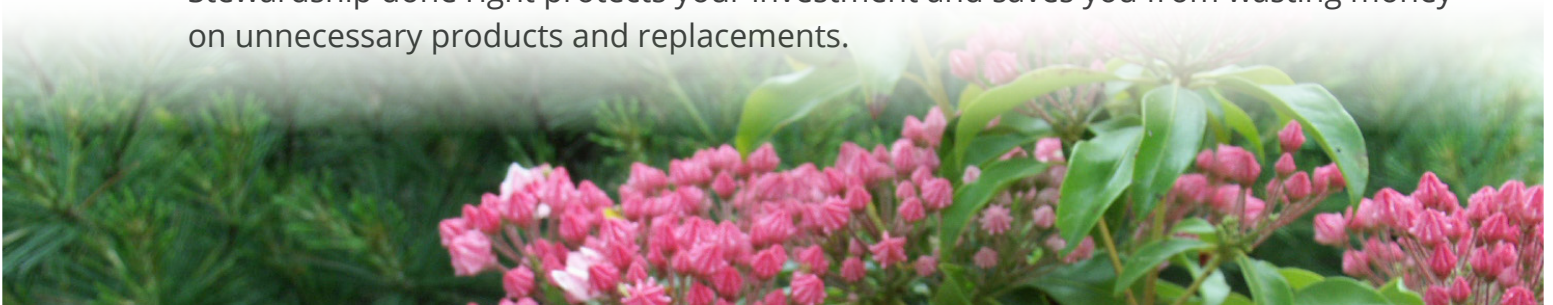
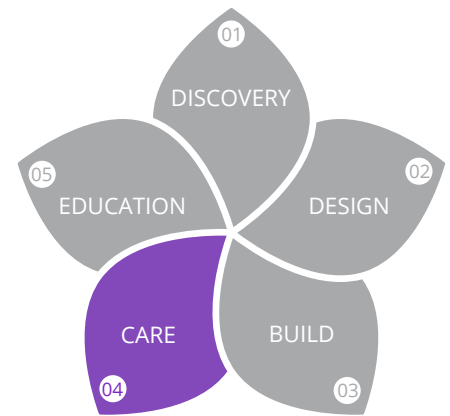
## 04 CARE

Once a landscape project is completed, it's not really finished. The best landscapes are living, evolving things of nature and as such need ongoing care and maintenance – that's just a fact of life.

### 8. *Plants, like people, need time to adapt*

It's hard being a plant, getting ripped out of the ground and moved dozens or even hundreds of miles and then stuck into an unfamiliar soil. As a result, plants in a newly constructed landscape often spend their first days or weeks in shock. Choosing the right plant for the right place is the best first steps toward success. Transporting and handling them correctly will go a long way toward survival. Next is ensuring the use of the right soils and right planting practices. But you aren't finished. There are three basic phases for restoring transplants to full health:

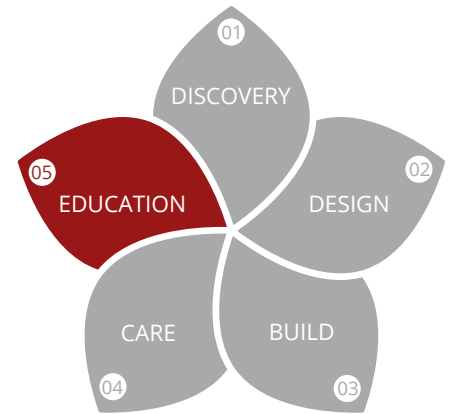
- **Acclimation After installation**, plants need extra care and attention to re-establish themselves, which can take anywhere from six to twelve months. This period is all about “checking in” with your plantings. Don't rely on automated systems to ensure they are going to make it. Nothing beats “visiting” your new plants regularly to simply help them out a little during this period.
- **Establishment** Once plants are well acclimated in their new home, they'll still need some attention and guidance. Plants in this stage do not have all the roots they need, so getting through a drought can be tricky, so some targeted hand watering may be helpful. They'll need support to grow straight and strong, so paying close attention to growth habit in this stage is wise. After three years most plants have the ability to stand and grow strong in the landscape.
- **Stewardship** This is a fancy word for the life-long care of the plants. As living things, they need periodic care and attention; for example, trees and shrubs benefit from careful pruning to guide their natural shapes within your landscape. Managing soil health is the best way to improve plant health and to avoid the dangers of drought. Stewardship done right protects your investment and saves you from wasting money on unnecessary products and replacements.





## 05 EDUCATION

The dynamics present in our eco-system keep gardeners of all kinds on their toes. Whether you are an avid home gardener or a seasoned professional, there is no cookie cutter approach to all landscaped environments. A successful landscape professional must be a superb diagnostician because it is rare that there is a “one-size-fits-all” solution to all of the problems that might arise in a landscape. The key to success is on-going education – both specific to a unique site – as well as of the broader environment.



### 9. *Learn about nature*

At the Garden Continuum, we believe strongly in education and helping our clients learn about nature and how to live in harmony with it. We offer a number of programs and tools for learning about the natural world and how to best enjoy your “*Life-Scape™*,” including:

**Our blog program and website** that are valuable resources for gardening and landscape development.

**Garden Coaching:** 90-minute seasonal-gardening coaching sessions for people who like to be outside, with helpful tips about tools, activities, and the right timing so they can better manage their gardens.

**On-line video training:** Roots Shoots & Leaves is garden ecology 101 for people who want to understand what is happening in their garden.

### 10. *The Garden Continuum: Creating harmony between people and their property*

As mentioned earlier in this eBook, there is a major different between landscaping and *Life-Scaping™*. Traditional landscaping does not address the core issues surrounding land development and human activity. Simply designing landscape features and adding “things” to an outdoor space is a poor strategy for enhancing and adding value to the land and benefiting the owner’s lifestyle. Instead, it wastes money and creates more problems than it solves because the project has not been implemented with careful consideration for what the land is best suited for and what it can sustain.



# LIFE-SCAPING™:

## INTEGRATING LAND AND LIFESTYLE

At the Garden Continuum, we strongly believe that aesthetics and functionality go hand-in-hand. We dig deeper than traditional landscapers or landscape designers to get to the heart of every project. We focus on fully understanding the needs, wants, wishes, and lifestyles of our clients to ensure that the *Life-Scape*™ design fits them and their properties perfectly. Our process is more intensive and revelatory than most – uncovering unique aspects of both our clients and their land to reveal design possibilities and create exciting opportunities that can add value and functionality to the project, their land, and to the environment.

Our design and implementation process includes FIVE PHASES? – far beyond that of a traditional landscaper:

- **01 Discovery** – In this early stage of our relationship, it is all about getting to know you, your property, and your big ultimate dream! We want to ensure right from the start that we understand exactly where you want to go and assure you with confidence that we can get you there.
  - **Landscape Discovery Session** - Free consultative session by phone to assist in the initial phases of inquiry as a way to establish basic project parameters and a rapport with our clients.
  - **On-Site Landscape Assessment** - A paid on-site assessment of current conditions and potentials as related to the client's needs, wants, & wishes. This is where we determine the feasibility of the client's desires – what will be possible, what will be easy and what may pose a challenge.
- **02 Design** – In this step, we develop a detailed project scope and an investment range, which will guide the design process noted below.
  - **Site Analysis** – This step gathers data from client records (surveys, building plans, utility documents, etc.) and from the site (measurements, photographs, inventory, etc.)



- **Conceptual Design** – The initial design submission will be the best representation of several ideas developed throughout the conceptual phase of the imagination process.
- **Final Design** – The final design will include all edits and alterations that evolve through the creative process of collaborative design. This will be what gets built.
- **03 Build** – The final design is interpreted through a highly detailed estimating process that pulls the design apart and drills down to each level of the construction process – first the infrastructure, then the structure, then the enhancements. This ensures that a comprehensive construction contract is submitted for review and approval before the first shovel hits the ground.
- **04 Care** – When we complete your project, The Garden Continuum doesn't just leave you to fend for yourself with your new outdoor environment. We are committed to the success of your *Life-Scape™*, so we include a unique, but critical, final step in the development process. This final phase is that we will return to check on your landscape several times over the next 90 days. Those checks are often brief site walks to see how each new element is doing. Sometimes those checks include making some tweaks or offering a helping hand to a struggling plant. These first months of your project's life are critical to the long-term success of your project.
- **05 Education** – We are genuinely interested in helping you learn and understand how your landscape functions. We have a dedicated Client Care Specialist that is available throughout the whole process and long after to get your questions answered. If you want to learn more and take some of the work on yourself, we are eager to teach you how.

A traditional landscape company will often skip right to the Build Phase after submitting a simple design because they see landscaping as a “product” equals “solution” endeavor – “feature-scaping” – without consideration for how these parts interact to become a whole or how these parts fair after the project is complete or how these parts ultimately satisfy YOU, the client. This eBook has hopefully outlined why this isn't so.





## TREAT YOURSELF TO A LIFE-CHANGING LANDSCAPE

These transformational spaces we call *Life-Scapes™* are full of potential for use and enjoyment for many years. They promise beauty, function and fun to all the people they support, and they also give back to our environment, which is in need of our attention and awareness more than ever. The bonus; a *Life-Scape™* also can increase the value of your property by making it stand out as a gorgeous, high-functioning piece of a desirable real estate in the marketplace.

If you are ready to get started, please sign up for a Landscape Discovery Session. A Landscape Discovery Session is a phone conference that will give you an opportunity to speak to a seasoned Landscape Design Development professional about your unique project. Before the call, you are invited to email up to three images of your project area and a list of your top three goals for your project. We also invite you to give us a little background about your landscape experiences. Through a review of these images, your list, and satellite images, we can offer first impression guidance on your project's potential opportunities and hurdles.



**FREE LANDSCAPE  
DISCOVERY SESSION**

Speaking to a Certified Landscape Professional can make all the difference in how successful you are in your Life-Scape™ efforts.

**SCHEDULE NOW**

