

Planting & Planning—Creating Your Backyard Oasis

By Rick Coppick

With the warmer days upon us, many Comox Valley residents are turning their attention to gardening and landscaping, as evidenced by the long lines at the nursery centers.

For others, however, this season brings with it a challenge. They say, “We like our home, but we just don’t know what to do with our yard.” Others say, “We want to change our yard to create more outdoor living space, but we don’t know where to start.”

Whether you think your yard just needs some sprucing up or a major overhaul, or you’re a new homeowner with a blank slate for landscaping, the first place to start is some soul-searching.

As with designing a home, form and function need to work well together. To achieve that, here are some questions to think about (and to discuss with a professional):

- What am I trying to accomplish with landscaping—my overall goal?
For instance, are you trying to create play space for the kids with a separate seating area for adult relaxation...a swimming pool with room for entertaining...an area for get-togethers that will revolve around the bbq...or just a facelift to an overgrown area of the yard that could have a better purpose and facilitate more outdoor living.
- What features do I need or want?
For instance, do you want a deck or patio for a seating area? Do you want a water feature so sounds of a fountain can soothe away the stress?



Do you have a pool or hot tub to consider? Is a grill and outdoor cooking space important?

- What degree of privacy am I trying to create, if any, with a makeover?
For instance, to create privacy, fencing, pergolas and arbors, and walls are all options in addition to hedges and other landscaping. Yet, others want to remove overgrown greenery and fencing to create a more open space.
- What “feel” am I trying to achieve?
For instance, do you want a “sanctuary” feel that is tranquil in a shady nook, or do you want an entertainment space that facilitates a good flow of guests? Do you want meandering paths or a stationary focal point, such as a gazebo or seating area?
- Do I like to garden or prefer a low-maintenance yard? And, if I like to garden, what types of plants do I

prefer—annuals, shrubs, evergreens, perennials? Do I prefer flowering plants?

- Do I want to make this a do-it-myself project, or should I really consult with a landscape professional to ensure I spend my budget wisely and the results are really what I envision?
- What is the budget for this project...and what is the timeline?

Armed with answers to these questions and even copies of photos that represent your answers to some of these questions, your meeting with a professional who assists with design and installation; this information will also help the do-it-yourselfers when speaking to staff at a nursery. Your end result will certainly reflect the planning that went into the planting, and you’ll be glad you did it.

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