Full Bloom Nursery

DIY Landscape Design with Kellie

From planning to planting, these DIY tips will help you design like a pro

From the first ideas to the final plantings, planning is essential. That's why you should break out the gridded graph paper and sketch a detailed plan for how you want your landscape to look. Don’t be afraid of this step! You don’t have to have any artistic skills to sketch out ideas on graph paper. The most important component of any landscape is the design. A well thought-out design will provide you with years of enjoyment. A poor design will yield years of regret and dissatisfaction.

1. Define areas and draw distinct borders. This creates harmony and emphasizes the “flow” of paths & sidewalks, landscaped bed edges, patios, etc. Begin the design by laying out the foundation planting. The foundation planting should take in the area immediately adjacent to the foundation of the home. Use flowing lines on the outer edge of the foundation planting. The flowing (curved) lines are more aesthetically pleasing and will make mowing the lawn area next to the foundation easier. Set the outer bed lines at least 5’ from the foundation of the home. Keep in mind that even most dwarf shrubs obtain an average width of 3-5’ and should be planted at least 2-3’ away from the home. Foundation plant selection is a critical element in the residential landscape. Choose plant material that will fit into space limitations. Consider the width and height of the plant at maturity, sun or shade needs, and soil and drainage requirements of selected plants. Most foundation plantings consist of at least two layers of plants that form the background for accent plants located at the entrances and taller shrubs located at the corners of the home. Refrain from planting shrubs that will outgrow their space, especially in front of windows or near landings leading to entrances.
2. Create eye appeal: Flowers always make a home seem more welcoming. Adorn your entrance with assorted annuals and perennials to keep your home awash with color all year long. The easiest way to transform the look of your home landscape is with blooms. Flowering perennials shrubs, and trees make an incredible impact across a yard, and you can add color in just one lasting step. (This is where the important element of color comes into play)
3. Don’t overdo it! This is one of the biggest mistakes made by the novice gardener- While it may be tempting to add lots of lush landscaping, it still has to be maintained. Consider the amount of upkeep that's reasonable for you. Limit the variety of plants you buy and choose low-maintenance ones. For any landscaping you have, the key is to keep it neat. A house can feel overtaken by [overgrown plants](https://www.southernliving.com/home/curb-appeal/bushes-shrubs-bad-for-front-house), especially in a small yard. Don't let bushes grow taller than the windows. Trim borders and vines to keep them tidy and under control. Keep flowerbed sizes small and maintainable. Even less contained areas spilling with flowers from every nook need control with a trim or thinning out every now and then.
4. Add a garden path. Whether stepping-stones, mulch, or pebbles, a garden path is a pretty walkway. It connects parts of your garden while defining boundaries of those areas. Use curving elegant lines that flow to a seating area where you can relax, enjoy a meal, or enjoy an afternoon nap. Even the [smallest yards](https://www.southernliving.com/home/yard/small-backyard-ideas) have room. Tuck a table for two in a private corner, or add cushioned chairs around a fire pit. With hanging baskets, potted plants, and colorful borders, this outdoor space just may become your favorite room. Your guests will think you hired a pro!

A drawing of a landscape design plan

Description automatically generated

Draw a map of your property on paper- this will keep you from making mistakes when you start buying and planting. This usually provides enough room to show detail but is likely to require the use of oversized paper to fit everything on one sheet. You can tape sheets of graph paper together to get the size you need or purchase oversized graph paper. Use different shading colors to define existing plants, trees etc verses things you want to add. This will visually allow you to see what the new plants and beds will look like.