

what is a master plan?



photos' courtesy of Environmental Landscape Associates

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Thinking about landscaping a new house or renovating an old one? The best, and first thing you should do, is to consult with a landscape architect/designer to develop a master plan.

You may be asking, "What is a Master Plan?" Simply put, a master plan is a comprehensive study of your existing site conditions and your proposed uses of the property. A master plan should include items you are considering for the future, as well as the present.

Typically, a master plan is conceptual: proposing ideas for the grand scheme of the property. This allows the client to have an overall goal and works toward the project development in phases of

Above: A front foundation entry elevated with natural stonewalls.

Right: A mechanical tree spade transplants 8" Zelkova trees.



installation. This phased installation allows for the budgeting of the project. Quite often, once the client has determined what areas of the property are the top priority, more detailed drawings are required. These detailed drawings may be specific to one or two phases or areas of the property typically required for construction.

The concept of considering all the elements thoroughly before the installation process should remain your most important goal.

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A brick terrace with bluestone banding in a rear yard garden.





An old water pump and watering trough is converted into a watergarden.



A millstone is incorporated into a stone garden path.

Helpful Hints for New Home Sites

PLANT LARGE TREES - Many new homes in developments are cleared lots with no mature trees. The trees in your master plan will take the longest to reach their maturity and function as the design has intended.

HARDSCAPES - Quite often, driveways, walkways and decking layouts are not well thought out. They just connect points A to B, and are not aesthetically pleasing.

GRADING/CONTOURING - Often drainage of the building lot is not adequately addressed, leaving areas of puddling and/or erosion. Also, hills and slopes can be utilized by building retaining walls and re-grading to give your landscape dimension and interest. Make the landscape fit into the surroundings, don't perch it on top of mounds.

Helpful Hints for Historic Home Sites

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS - Utilize the architecture of the period



Before shot of Hillside near barn.



After shot of hillside near barn with terraced walls and pathway.

and select materials and a garden style to accentuate. Consider salvaging building stones or statuary from the site.

VEWS - Key in on desirable views of the surrounding landscape. A large mature tree or structure may be utilized as a focal point. Landscape lighting may be used to further accentuate

these focal points.

EXISTING TREES AND SHRUBS - Don't be afraid to thin out and remove some trees in a heavily wooded lot to create garden rooms. Often, large trees and shrubs can be transplanted and relocated providing a mature appearance to the landscape. This mature appearance works well with older historic architecture.

Large trees are transplanted in the front yard of a Chestnuthill home.

