



SketchPad Landscape Values

Few home remodeling projects would fail to be improved by better landscaping. This is an underappreciated aspect of construction that can quickly turn a good project into a great impression. The job really isn't done until that mess in the yard is cleaned up and the builder and the owner both look good.

FUNDING POLICY

Let's face it: Construction is never kind to the landscape. Trees get cut down, shrubs get squashed, and ground cover gets trampled. All for a good cause. But, nonetheless, it doesn't help the overall appearance of the home. Curb appeal especially suffers when an extensive remodel takes place.

And, remember that the best referrals are the ones you get from those viewing a recently completed job. However, that next customer isn't going to be overly impressed by the trampled shrubs near the back door where the drywall went in or the dead patches on the lawn from where the lumber pile was.

The best policy is to have funds set aside in the contract to restore the landscape. Although this amount may get taken out in the final negotiations to trim the cost, it shows concern by the builder to see that the owner is left with a fully completed job. If this is not possible, try to make sure the homeowner is left with enough money at the end to ensure that your good work is properly enhanced. Generally, 5% of the contract amount will pay for a lot of landscaping.

Most people don't realize how hard builders try to avoid any damage to the home's landscaping. We use silt fences, protection barriers, and admonish our employees to watch out for the owner's prized gardening, but still there is some inevitable destruction.

Some remodelers have complete restoration costs built into their price, although it is rare to find an actual landscape plan for any addition. However, it's a great way to introduce your landscape contractor to some new clients, and vice versa.

YOUR REPUTATION AT STAKE

Another overlooked aspect of landscaping is how much it tones down the impact of change to the neighborhood and the homeowner's lifestyle. The faster the new addition can be re-integrated into the context, the more readily it will be accepted and the sooner the owner's memory of noise, dust, and annoyance will be forgotten.

Often when you let homeowners handle the landscape repair, the job



Nice little house



looks good with the addition,



but looks even better with landscaping!

will languish while they recover from construction fatigue. All the while, it's the builder's reputation that suffers from the mess in the yard.

Lastly, let's not forget that not all additions or changes look great on the outside. Planting ivy has been a recourse for builders and architects throughout the centuries, and sometimes it takes a little more than that. Even Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater would look naked without the trees. There's no better way to soften the edges and break the shock of new construction than by rapidly integrating the structure with the surroundings. For most of us that means trees and shrubs, foundation plantings, and ground cover. The homeowner, landscaper, and the neighborhood will all profit from the restored greenery — and better still, it makes the contractor look good. —*Dick Kawalek, a registered architect for more than 30 years, is founder of Kawalek Architects, in Cleveland; rck@rktek.com.*