



So Much More Than Curb Appeal...



THE IMPACT OF A FIRST IMPRESSION IS UNDENIABLY POWERFUL AND IT IS WIDELY ACCEPTED THAT THE OPINIONS FORMED IN AN INITIAL THREE-SECOND SNAPSHOT ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO CHANGE.

So if this theory holds true with people meeting people, it stands to reason that the first impression of a home will be formed well before you walk through the front door.

As any real estate professional will explain, a property's "curb appeal"—or lack thereof—has a major impact on the level of buyer interest in any property and the selling price can be substantially affected by external appearance. The concept of curb appeal ranges from whether the lawns are maintained and the kids' toys out of sight, through to utilizing and enhancing a property's surroundings to create a unique external landscape—either way, the aim is to make the property more appealing.

Some homeowners consider curb appeal long before their property goes on the market, which gives them the chance to enjoy the new ambiance before passing it on to a new owner.

According to Martin Stockley of Terracraft Landscape, the past decade has seen a shift in the concept of landscaping, whereby the external areas blend with both the style and design of the home as well as the natural surrounds.

"There used to be a strong distinction between the house, with all its internal functionality and the garden, which could be anything from a lawn and some flower beds to a real stand alone showpiece," Martin explains.

"Now people are striving to bring the external beauty into their living space, so features such as ponds, waterfalls and rockscapes are easily visible from key areas of the home."

Terracraft Landscape has gained a reputation for designing and constructing major landscape projects which tend to involve some serious problem solving.

"The truth is," says Martin, "when you're working on a large, complex and creative project, you never know exactly what you're going to get, so you're constantly adapting to cater to the conditions and environment."

The definition of landscaping is 'to improve the natural features of a piece of land' and Martin concedes that working with nature to create this enhancement is a much better bet than working against her—"Mother Nature always wins!"

On the west coast, for example, water plays a vital role. Drainage needs to be addressed before embarking on any construction work and in areas like the Sea to Sky corridor and Vancouver's North Shore, it's not unusual to unearth seasonal, natural springs in the early stages of excavation.

"You need to adapt your plan to work with or around natural impediments," Martin says.

It's not always the environment that dictates modifications to the original plans. For many clients, as they observe the evolution of their landscape project, they see opportunities for change or expansion that will ultimately enhance the whole property.

These additions of course, add to the project cost at the time, but it's far more cost effective than adding elements at a later date.

For these reasons, many landscapers are reluctant to lock in a project price, especially when structural landscaping is involved. The most common approach is to begin with a ball park budget and work with a landscaper on design concepts, contents and requirements, then throughout the project, you'll be updated on both the progress and the budget.

It is wise to have some cash in reserve, as that extra 10 percent may help to solve an unforeseen problem or better still, elevate the final product from excellent to extraordinary.

Yes, landscaping can add anywhere from 10–20 percent to the value of a property, but Martin is most enamoured with the personal impact it has on individual people. He is in constant contact with clients and even those who are living elsewhere are sent photos on a weekly basis, so they can participate in the evolution of their landscape.

"Sometimes it's difficult to see past the yard full of excavators, dump trucks and bobcats and get an appreciation for what the finished product will look like," Martin says.

"But I guess they all manage to because, despite any hiccups that might occur along the way, I've not yet had a client who isn't thrilled with the finished product. In fact, many clients have become friends so I get to enjoy my work at dinners and afternoon drinks on their patio!"

For more information about landscaping contact Terracraft Landscape at 1.604.932.5666 or terracraft@telus.net.

