



CHOOSING THE RIGHT KIND OF LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE FIRM

By Surrounds Landscape Architecture + Construction

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Lots of landscaping companies offer basic yard maintenance services. That is, mowing, edging, mulching, weeding, and spring and fall clean-ups. Along with routine maintenance, a few landscaping companies are also capable of installing new trees and shrubbery, transplanting or replacing failing plants, digging new planting beds, and laying sod or spreading seed for new or replacement lawns.

A far smaller number of companies offer all of the above plus horticultural expertise and all-in-one landscaping services. That would include seasonal pruning, seasonal enhancements, customized turf care, proactive pest control, irrigation system tune-ups, and equipment maintenance for ponds and water features.

A standard landscape maintenance company will keep your lawn and gardens looking neat and presentable. But is neat and presentable enough for you? More importantly, is it enough for your gardens?

That's the question we'll try to help you answer in this eBook. This eBook is for the homeowner who wants to see and feel something deeply personal when they step into their backyard, or see their home framed by welcoming front yard landscaping as they turn into their driveway.



THE “NATURE” OF GARDENS

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of what makes the difference in garden care and landscape maintenance, let's agree that gardens are not a “set and forget” affair. Your landscape is a living, ever-changing ecosystem that evolves and needs consistent, knowledgeable care over time to achieve its full potential. That requires trained personnel who are attentive to all the details in the landscape—both mechanical and horticultural.

The best of what you see in your landscaping and gardens is the result of time and patience. The patient stewardship of your landscape, lawn, and gardens makes it possible in time for the landscape architect's original vision to reveal itself in its fullest expression.

If you have a young garden or freshly planted section on your property, the sort of care it will need is quite different from a landscape that has had a few years to establish itself. Here is what you can expect to see during the early years:

Year One

The newly installed plants are small and spaced to allow for growth to fill the open areas between them. It may appear to you that not much is happening there--but a lot is happening underground. Your plants are adapting to a new environment that is different from the nursery where they were grown. They are developing root systems that will make them more self-reliant and able to survive changing seasonal conditions. A balanced irrigation schedule is critical at this time. Too much water can be just as harmful as too little.



Year Two

You'll see more fullness in foliage and blossoms. Anchored by that thriving root system, the plants are now able to develop above ground, reaching out to capture more energy from the sun to power increased growth. Now is the time to begin early-season cutbacks and dormant stage pruning to encourage vigorous growth the following spring. It is also a time to replace plants that didn't survive or relocate others that aren't doing well where they are.

Years Three and Four

Now that the root systems are well established, your plants direct most of their energy into growth above ground. You will see your plants branching out, pushing out foliage and bursting into bloom. They begin to take on the shape and size of maturity. Now is the time to apply finesse by making subtle adjustments and with corrective pruning to guide plants into their natural growth patterns. At this point, there will be less need for irrigation because established plants will be able to survive dry periods and recover on their own.

The best landscape professionals are keenly aware of the growth patterns (i.e., natural shape, height, and width) that garden plants will take on as they reach maturity. They are aware of how the landscape designer has arranged plants in groupings (large to small) and layers (low to high) to arrive at a balanced, unified composition. And they follow that pattern to bring out the intended effect of the design. Also, they will spot opportunities to relocate plants to better positions, introduce new plant species into the mix, and replace plants that have failed.

Your landscape improves significantly when caretakers respond to growth and change by taking corrective actions when necessary or making minor adjustments to keep it looking naturally beautiful.

WHAT YOU DON'T "SEE" MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

When you view an impressive landscape, you probably won't be able to point out the detailed craftsmanship and finesse that has gone into creating that breath-taking scene. But you can certainly see and appreciate the results of it. The best garden on the street (if it isn't yours) will most likely be the one that is getting the detailed attention it deserves.

With a horticulturally oriented company, the crew isn't there to perform a prescribed set of tasks and leave. They want to make sure the plants are happy. And if they are not, they are going to do something about it. This type of company takes a proactive approach to landscape maintenance and garden care.

The moment those landscape technicians step onto the property, they are assessing the condition of the plants and turf. As they perform their scheduled tasks, they are also looking for the right shades of green in the foliage, for plentiful blooms, and buds that are fat and healthy. If they see something that does not look right, they are going to zero in on it and identify the cause: insects or disease? too much moisture or not enough? They'll be able to correctly identify the problem and treat it appropriately before it harms the plant--and most likely before the homeowner even noticed it.

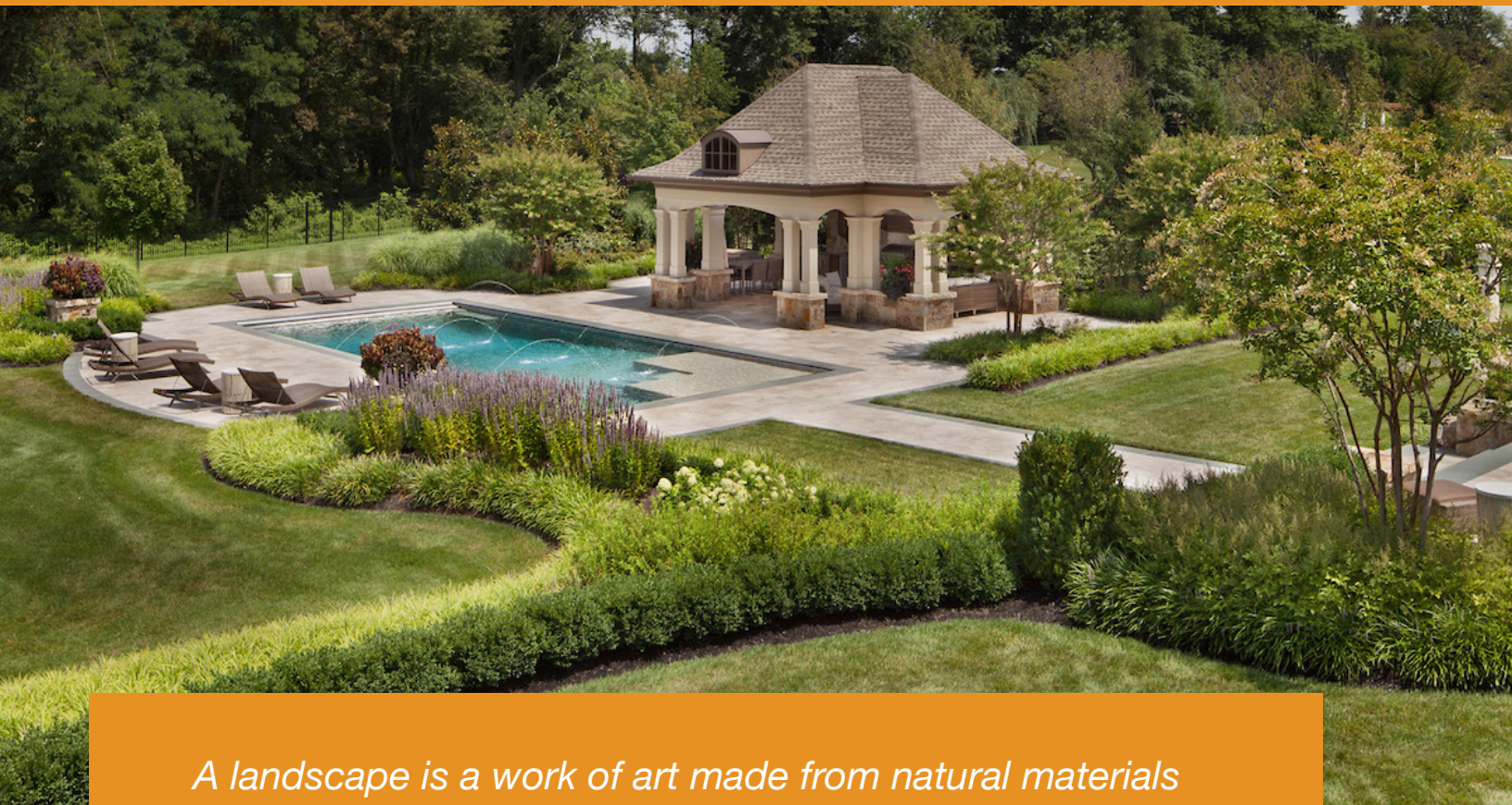
Top-notch garden care makes the difference between a garden that flourishes in all seasons and one that doesn't live up to its potential.



WHY LANDSCAPES DON'T REACH THEIR FULLEST EXPRESSION

- 1. Too much water.** Overwatering is as hard on the landscape as under-watering. Evergreens are especially sensitive to too much water. Aside from blue spruce and other needle-bearing trees, boxwood and laurel are the most sensitive. Lawns, too, are adversely affected by overwatering. They can develop fungus issues such as “red thread” which presents as sunken brown spots in the turf during mid-summer.
- 2. Too much mulch.** First, there are “mulch volcanoes.” You’ve seen them--mulch mounded against a tree trunk in a cone shape. Over time, this will cause the bark to rot. The other mistake is layers of mulch that are so thick they suffocate the roots. Mulch is good for trees and plants because it holds moisture and breaks down into organic materials that feed the roots. In excess, though, it is harmful. There should be no more than two to four inches of mulch cover.
- 3. Irrigation gone wild.** If an irrigation spray head is out of adjustment, it may batter plants or trees. Hitting the same area over and over again can damage them. Regular checks and maintenance of the irrigation system keep this type of issue from occurring.





A landscape is a work of art made from natural materials and living things that are in a state of constant change.

- 4. Improper pruning practices.** Hand pruning is the best way to care for almost everything that grows in your yard. A lot of companies only employ shearing. Shearing with a power tool is a quick, easy way to maneuver through a property but is not ideal for all plants because it promotes growth on the exterior only and impedes air-flow throughout the interior of the plant. This can cause pest and fungal issues that normally would not develop.
- 5. Consistently timed maintenance visits.** When you have a company that only comes once a month, and they do everything all at once, they may not be pruning at the right time for the particular type of plant. If you have plants that never seem to blossom or boxwoods that are brown at the tips, they were either pruned too late or too soon.
- 6. Wrong plant in the wrong place.** If you don't know your plants, they get placed incorrectly. They end up getting too much sun or not enough, too much moisture or not enough. The plant dies, or it just doesn't thrive.

It is also important to balance the variety of plant types on the property. Some plants are more hospitable to pollinators than others. Encouraging the presence of pollinators can give all your garden plants just the boost they need. Flowers bloom more intensely. Hollies produce hearty fists of berries.

CHOOSING A LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE COMPANY

It's important to ask good questions before signing a contract for landscape maintenance services. Even if you think your property only needs basic services, you still want to know:

Who will be in charge of my account?

Communication should be easy. One point of contact is best. You want to know that your preferences will be communicated to the landscaping crew and that you only have to tell the account manager or crew foreman once.

Will the same crew come to my property on each visit?

Yes is the answer you want to hear. A dedicated crew "learns" your property, and that makes it possible for them to take care of it exactly as you wish consistently. They will know how it should look when it is at its best and will notice if something is amiss.

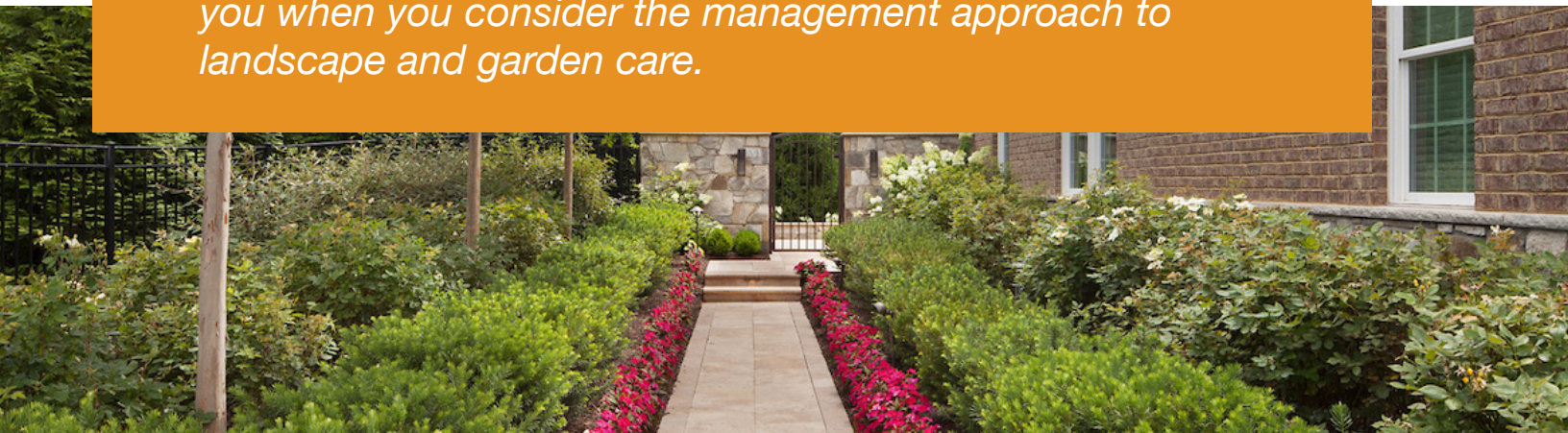
What about pesticide and insecticide use?

Industry best practices for disease and pest treatments specify an "integrated pest management" (IPM) approach. All plants are inspected on each visit, so if problems arise, they can be identified and accurately diagnosed in the early stages. If intervention is required, it will be applied only as necessary based observation and horticultural expertise.

Will irrigation system inspections be regularly scheduled?

The answer should be yes. Regular inspections ensure that your turf and plants are getting the correct amount of moisture throughout the growing season as the temperature and humidity conditions change.

A world of delightful possibilities presents itself to you when you consider the management approach to landscape and garden care.



BEYOND CONVENTIONAL LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

Bad things happen to gardens all the time. There are soil issues, changing moisture conditions, insect infestations, and disease. Without regular inspection, any of these issues could damage or even kill beloved trees and plants. At the very least, you will have a yard that becomes increasingly lackluster and boring over time if you stick with the conventional approach--standard landscape maintenance. On the other hand, a world of possibilities opens up when you work with a firm that practices a management approach to landscape and garden care.

Even if your landscape doesn't include specimen plants, water features, irrigation and lighting systems, a landscape management approach brings professionals who possess detailed horticultural knowledge and an extensive skill set to work on your landscape and gardens.

A landscape management company will provide an integrated mix of services that includes holistic plant care and turf care, as well as mechanical systems maintenance.

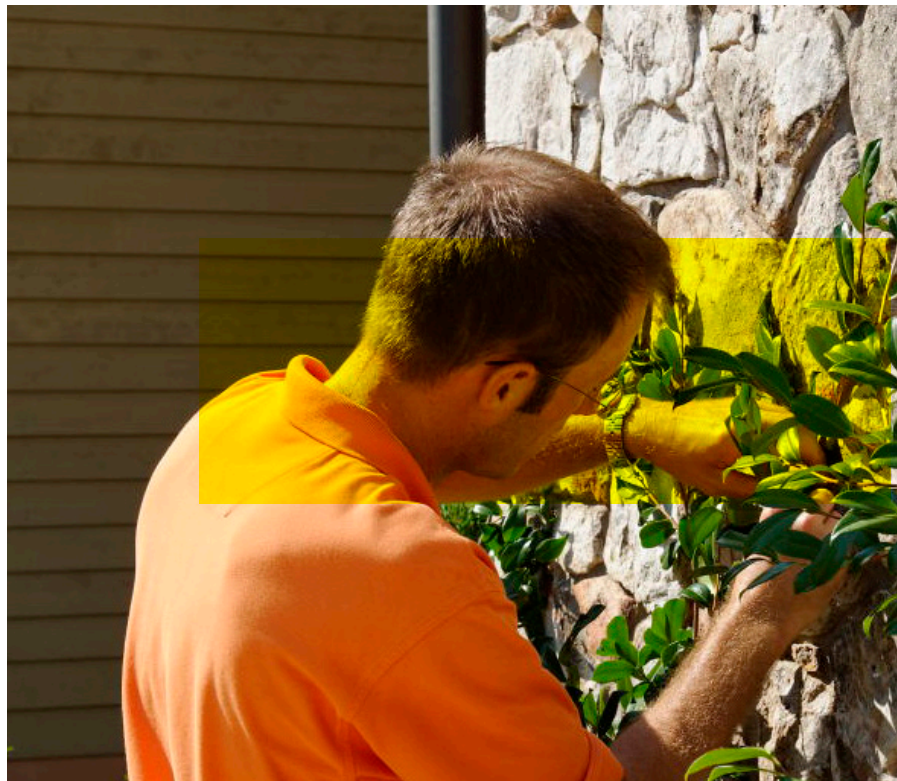
Hiring a landscape management firm is worth it to the person who wants to get all the beauty and value out of their property over multiple seasons. It's for the person who truly enjoys a healthy, thriving outdoor environment. A well-maintained garden is an everyday pleasure and worth the investment because it's something that enriches your life.



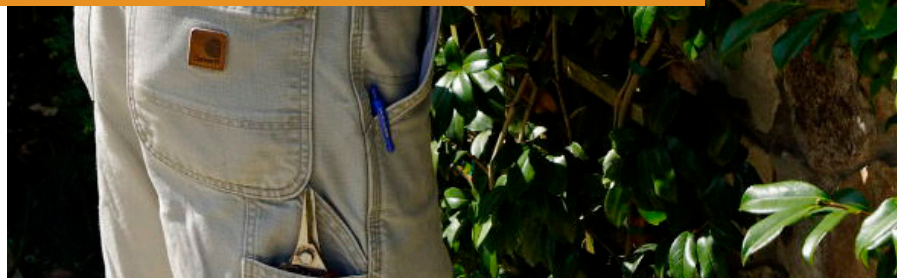
LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE INFORMED BY LANDSCAPE DESIGN

There is a direct connection between landscape maintenance and landscape design. Strategic garden care is a natural extension of design because the landscape design--the selections of plants, the groupings, and the geometry of the site--set the course for the maintenance to follow. At Surrounds, we call this design-conscious approach to all-in-one landscape and garden care **Garden Management**.

Besides respect for design, our garden management process is steeped in horticultural expertise. Fine-tuning the landscape by adding color displays or perennial groupings, or by making meticulous adjustments (pruning, cutting back, thinning out, transplanting), is what brings out its greatness. Aside from the aesthetic benefit, skilled plant care promotes good health by letting air and light into the interior of plants, and stimulating growth and longevity.

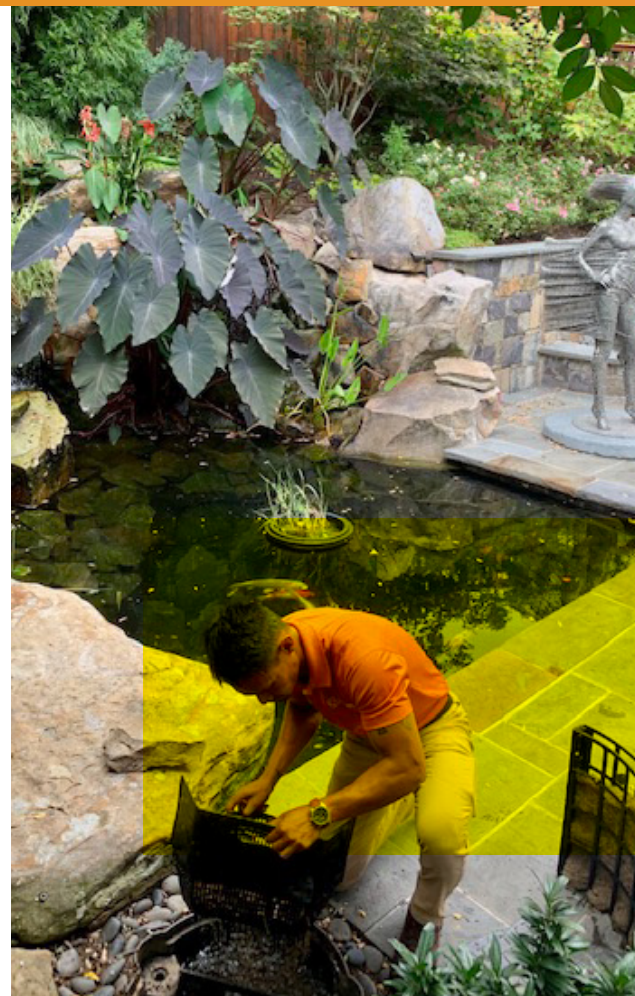


The garden management approach integrates the horticultural and mechanical aspects of a landscape. It just makes sense to have the same company that is caring for your lawn and gardens also be in charge of monitoring the irrigation system that supports them.



Essentially, a landscape is a work of art made from natural materials and living things that are in a state of constant change. The landscape design is not “finished” when construction is completed and the landscape installation crews clear off the site. That is the beginning. A garden needs consistent care to achieve and maintain its full expression.

Surrounds is a combined landscape architecture, landscape construction, and garden management firm. We build what we design and take care of what we’ve built. Our architects know construction. Our construction and garden management crews understand design. We believe this all-in-one approach best serves homeowners because it supports clear communication, creative collaboration, and procedural efficiencies that significantly benefit you, our client.



WHAT NEXT

If you’d like to find out more about the way Surrounds integrates landscape design and garden management, click the image below to download our eBook **The Secret to Surrounds Landscapes for Outdoor Living**.

The first decision you make is the most important.

Free eBook:
The Secret to Surrounds Landscapes for Outdoor Living

GET THE EBOOK

DISCUSS YOUR LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE WITH A GARDEN MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST

SCHEDULE CALL

If you’d like to speak with a **Garden Management Specialist** about ensuring continued beauty and abundance in your landscape, click the blue image to schedule a phone consultation.



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