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CHICAGO COLLECTION

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**Lush
Landscaping
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Spring's
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{outdoor décor}



WAREHOUSE ROOF TERRACE. PHOTO BY MARTIN KONOPACKI, ©PRASSAS LANDSCAPE STUDIO

As the snow thaws and plants begin to bloom in the Windy City, the urge to burst into the great outdoors reaches a fever pitch. No doubt you're ready for spring—but what about your outdoor space? Whether yours is a backyard or a balcony, it doesn't have to be an eyesore. Here, CHICAGO COLLECTION helps make the most of what you've got with a few insider landscaping tips from the pros.

{landscaping 101}

Local experts Stephen Prassas of **Prassas Landscape Studio** (70 W. Hubbard St., Suite 201, 312.467.1330, prassaslandscapestudio.com) and Michael Anthony of **1 Design Group, Inc.** (630.205.0028, 1Designgroup.com) have a combined 30 years in the business (and have both been featured on HGTV). Though they may boast different aesthetics, they do agree on a few landscape basics. Before you begin your redesign, consider these outdoor fundamentals straight from the experts:



STEPHEN PRASSAS, PRASSAS LANDSCAPE STUDIO.



LORI AND MICHAEL ANTHONY, 1 DESIGN GROUP, INC. PHOTO BY JOHN FRANGOULIS

Hire a Professional

“A designer will [actually] save you money,” Anthony says. “Only a rich man can afford cheap landscaping. You’re going to have to constantly go back and fix it.”

While it may be tempting to jump right in with your own aesthetically pleasing ideas, there are dozens of logistical elements to keep in mind. Components such as maintenance and functionality; climatic conditions such as water and wind (especially crucial when dealing with rooftops); and weight limitations and material considerations make the task larger—and much more in-depth—than you may think. “There are so many elements of landscape that a professional is trained to consider,” Prassas says. And the sooner you start planning, the better. “Allow time to flush out a design,” Prassas suggests. “To consider all of those things is really a process. Really good designs aren’t done overnight.”

Consider Landscaping an Investment

“People are putting a much higher value on outdoor space than they used to,” Prassas says. “In the city, because outdoor space is at such a premium, the amount of money you get back from your house because of the money you spend is significantly more than if you were in the suburbs. You’re essentially adding rooms to the house.”

Keep in mind that the exterior of a home is one of the first things that a potential buyer sees, and for smaller spaces, a flourishing balcony can be a huge selling point.

“If you have an outdoor space and you’ve finished it off, people can immediately see how it would be used,” Prassas agrees. “It’s an incredible added value to the home.”

Be Kind to the Environment

Hailing from arid Texas, Anthony is always conscious of products like Synlawn that promote water conservation during maintenance. “For a lot of people [in the Midwest], water is not their number one concern,” he says. “But it’s one thing I think we should all pay attention to.” Prassas also favors more green solutions, such as renewable materials and the use of more vegetated space.

{small}

When working with small spaces, such as a balcony, tiny patio or narrow courtyard walkway, options may seem limited. But with a few quick tricks, you can easily max out the minimal.



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Mirrors

“With small garden spaces, it’s nice to use mirrors to make the space feel a lot bigger,” Anthony says. He recommends placing a mirror right behind a window frame to add the illusion of extra space—as well as a visual splash. “It opens it up quite a bit.”

LINCOLN PARK GARDEN PATH. PHOTO BY STEPHEN PRASSAS, ©PRASSAS LANDSCAPE STUDIO

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Art

Artwork is easy to incorporate in any outdoor space. Anthony, a big fan of glass and tile mosaics, recommends using pieces that aren't necessarily big but that add a lot of interesting detail. "It really makes it individual and puts the homeowner back into the project," he says.



Lightweight Planters

While plants add an instant pop of color and life, it's important to be realistic—and aware of Chicago's extreme seasons—when choosing them.

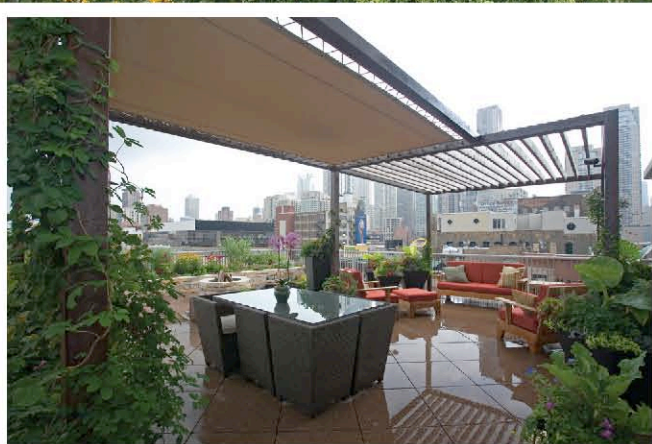
"Any plantings that you do out there have to be considered temperature severe. With our weather conditions, [most] don't survive too long," Prassas says.

Anthony favors unique, cold-hearted breeds that tend to do quite well in Chicago's fickle climate such as agave or yucca rostrata. "They add a unique texture to any garden," he says. Added bonus? "Very little maintenance. Once they grow, they look just like a living sculpture."

YUCCA ROSTRATA PLANT IN ORE CONTAINER, 1 DESIGN GROUP, INC.

{medium}

With a medium-sized space, such as a rooftop terrace, it's all about the grandiose use of the elements. Water and fire features, for example, are becoming more and more prominent each season, but Prassas notes that each presents its own unique challenges.



RIVER NORTH ROOFTOP TERRACE. PHOTOS BY MARTIN KONOPACKI, © PRASSAS LANDSCAPE STUDIO

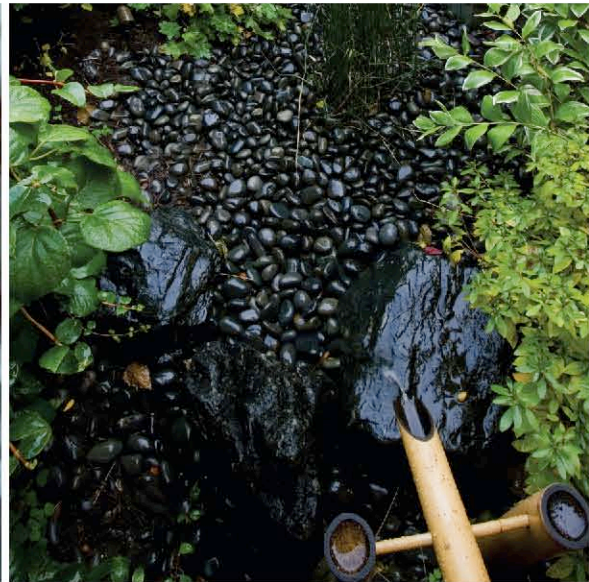
shade

A canopy can be a godsend during the dog days of summer but poses some problems with other weather conditions. "Wind is a serious consideration with rooftops, making sure things don't blow off or get destroyed," Prassas says. "Having a canopy structure that's anchored down is crucial."



fire

1 Design Group, Inc. made this water/fire feature using a solid metal urn known as a sugar kettle (sugarkettles.com).



water

"Water is very heavy, so there's consideration there," Prassas says. "You have to [assess] the amount of weight you're adding to the roof."

{large}

Those who are lucky enough to have an actual yard have free reign. Foliage? Furniture? Fountains? The choice is yours. Here's what's hot for 2011:



CRAIG JAMES SOCIA GARDEN DESIGN



SYNLAWN, 1740 W. WEBSTER AVE., 773.867.5296, SYNLAWN.COM

balance

"Creating a balance between the amount of living space you have and the amount of green is crucial," Prassas says. Expertly executing the delicate blend means you'll have ample room for hanging out, with plenty to admire while outside.



trees

"Trees add lots of value," Anthony says. "They offer shade, structure to a garden, fall colors... which are really important in the Chicagoland area, and in the Midwest."

cozy furniture

With the right furniture, your backyard space can quickly become a family gathering area. Says Prassas, "Creating an outdoor living room is one of the biggest trends. People are using their outdoor spaces in a more casual way for more than just sitting outside and dining." He notes that aspiring landscapers are veering toward comfortable pieces such as lounge chairs and sofas. "They're more conducive to entertaining."



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FURNITURE FACTS

When shopping for outdoor furniture, there are a few key things to keep in mind. Nathaniel Ross of local design company **Matter & Order** (701 S. Wells St., 312.330.5025, matterandorder.com) shares his tips for finding your new favorite pieces:

Know the Space

"Make sure you write down the dimensions of the space before heading out the door. This will help avoid buying pieces that are too large or too small for your space," Ross suggests. Keep in mind that extra space may also be necessary in some circumstances. Ross notes that you'll need to account not only for the table or chair's dimensions, but also for the space behind the chairs or around the table.

Have a Purpose

Ross recommends asking a few simple questions: "Will you frequently entertain family and friends? Or will you only be using the space for leisurely afternoons in the sun? This ultimately helps determine the type and amount of furniture you will need," he says.

Buy Quality

While outdoor furniture is made from a variety of materials of varying quality, Ross recommends recycled plastic as opposed to other popular materials like wrought iron, which is dated and needs frequent upkeep, or wicker or wood, which tend to fade quickly. "Recycled plastic is long-lasting, weather resistant, good for the environment and made by several reputable manufacturers in a variety of designs." Ross likes Loll Designs, available at **Design Within Reach** (10 E. Ohio St., 312.280.4677, dwr.com), **Room & Board** (55 E. Ohio St., 312.222.0970, roomandboard.com) and lolldesigns.com.