

LANDSCAPE QUESTIONNAIRE

Mount Hood Gardens is a landscape design/build company with more than twenty years of experience in the business. We design and install quality landscapes that improve with maturity. Healthy soils result in healthy plants. We believe in sustainable landscapes, and practice organic gardening and thorough soil preparation. Most plants are grown in our own nursery, resulting in acclimated, robust plants just right for our area.

Landscaping is about creating sacred spaces, a sanctuary surrounding your home. Sound landscaping also adds actual value to your home. It provides structure, comfortable enclosure and privacy, enhancing desirable views and screening unwanted ones. Building a garden is to create a living, dynamic ecosystem, which will change and develop its own identity as it matures. You and nature will fill it with life. Attracting desirable wildlife, such as birds, may be a goal.

The best way to approach a landscape installation is to start with a comprehensive plan. A *landscape design* will provide the framework or structure for the garden and let you determine good features, problems and ideas on paper. This will enable you to avoid costly changes later on and also to closely determine the estimated cost of the project. If desired, you can then install the garden in phases.

The objective for the landscape is to blend with your home and its surroundings, be functional and aesthetically pleasing and environmentally sound. The garden is to please your senses and enhance your well being. Gardens give peace.

When designing and developing a landscape, thorough *planning* is well worth the time and effort and will make the subsequent installation easier and more enjoyable.

Materials and plants can be procured in advance, and an estimate of the cost of the project prepared. Think about what features or plants you are especially drawn to. Peruse magazines, gardening shows, neighbors' or friends' landscapes, attend gardening lectures and classes. This will give you an idea what *you* want and visualize for your landscape. A landscape designer will be able to assist you, but this is *your* garden and it should reflect your taste and ideals.

A landscape is a prudent investment, which should be well thought out and planned with care. The following *questions* were created to achieve a landscape design, which fits your needs and expectations and suits your family. A design transforms your dreams and visions for your landscape into a realistic, tangible format. While not all may be practical, as many of your desired elements as possible will be incorporated in your landscape design.

Not all questions may pertain to you, and you are free to leave out the ones which do not apply. Please note we do not work in Washington State at this time.

Client Name: _____ *Date:* _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ *Email:* _____

Cont.

1. Have you worked with a LANDSCAPE DESIGNER OR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT in the past? If yes, where and when ?

2. What are your EXPECTATIONS for a DESIGN?

3. Do you live in the Gorge seasonally or year-around? If seasonally, which are the months you usually spend here? _____

4. What would you call the ARCHITECTURAL STYLE of your home?

5. As the landscape is considered an extension of your home, some INTERIOR ELEMENTS can be repeated on the outside. Examples may be paint colors or floor materials.
Do you have a favorite decorating style, and, if so, did you or are you going to use it in your home?

6. Are you planning any major renovations (additions, house painting) in the near future (if your home has not been recently built)? _____

7. Do you have a favorite LANDSCAPE STYLE?
Examples are English Cottage, French Country, Mediterranean, Asian, contemplative (Zen Garden), “New American”, naturalistic. A garden can be romantic, practical, formal/ informal, include edible plants, and attract wildlife (deer may be a problem). As mentioned, the best landscapes blend with the architecture of the home and its surroundings. Around the house the landscape style can be more formal, gradually becoming more naturalistic as it transitions into the native landscape. Urban gardens often lend themselves to a more formal outlay or Asian theme. They can also be naturalistic, but tend to need more structure.
Dividing the landscape into separate areas (garden rooms) allows for more versatility, resulting in the option to combine several landscape styles.

Cont.

8. Which **HARDSCAPE ELEMENTS** are most important to you in your future landscape? Examples are large or small patios or decks, a secret sitting area, raised vegetable beds, A playground for children. Structures such as pergolas arbors and gazebos add a vertical element and provide shade and privacy. Trellises with climbing plants reduce the wind. What kind of hardscape elements do you envision and where would they be?

9. How large do you envision your **OUTDOOR AREAS** to be? Do you frequently entertain, like to eat dinner outside, want a place to have coffee in the morning, or read a book? A place for solitude may be a private arbor bench or a hammock. Our long and generally sunny summers lend themselves to creating outdoor living spaces. If you think of the landscape as a series of outdoor rooms, what would you call them?

10. Is **WIND** a problem in your landscape (it frequently is in the Gorge)? Are there protected spots? _____

11. Do you favor sunny or shady areas? In the summer, some shade is often welcome.

12. Which **OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES** do you foresee yourself enjoying in your garden and want to include? _____

13. Do you have **CHILDREN** at home? If so, what are their ages? Do you have grandchildren, godchildren or other young people who may visit and spend time in the garden? What are their preferences? What games may they want to play in the garden?

14. Do you have elderly parents or relatives who live with you or come to visit? Is **WHEELCHAIR-ACCESSIBILITY** important? _____

Cont.

15. What MATERIALS do you favor for your hardscape? They can be wood, recycled plastic deck materials such as Trex, natural stone in many colors and origins, pavers (man-made materials), exposed aggregate, concrete (colored or plain) or brick. Paths may also use gravel, bark, crushed filbert shells or similar materials as a surface. Safety, functionality, a dry passage, longevity and cost are points to consider. What colors do you like for your hardscape materials?

If you need retaining walls, do you envision using natural (stone, boulders) or man-made materials for these (block/concrete)?

Simplicity and permanence are a virtue when it comes to materials. One usually does not want to use more than two to three main materials in the landscape to achieve continuity and unity throughout.

16. What are your FAVORITE VIEWS? Consider both inside and outside views.

A. INSIDE: Which rooms or places in your house do you spend the most time in? Can you see outside into the garden from there? Generally the view lines from the kitchen sink, a bay window nook, the living and dining room are important.

B. OUTSIDE: What are your favorite views outside? Do you have a view of Mount Hood, Mount Adams, the hills or the Columbia River? Does your neighbor have a beautiful tree you enjoy? This concept is called "*borrowed scenery*", those views being an integral part of your landscape.

17. UNWANTED VIEWS: Not all views are desirable and with growing building density, screening is an important issue. Which views or elements do you wish to screen? Where do you feel you need the most privacy? Consider all seasons. Often the winter screening is not as essential, as you do not spend as much time outside. Letting as much light into the house as possible is much appreciated during our mostly cloudy winters. Deciduous trees or a mix of deciduous/ evergreen screening plants often work well in that regard.

18. What do you anticipate being the most frequent TIME OF DAY you will use your different sitting and garden areas? This will probably depend on whether it is a weekday or weekend, and the time of the year.

Cont.

19. The PLANTS are called the *softscape* in the garden. They are only considered after you have determined the beforehand-illustrated points. Once you are ready to think about the plants, choose the structural plants such as trees, conifers and large shrubs first.

- a. Do you have suitable existing TREES? Generally, trees only need to be removed if they are sick, a fire hazard, a problem during the winter (ice breakage) or too close to the residence or building. Often an arborist can improve a tree with careful pruning and thinning out or limb it up for increased fire safety and visibility. Some trees may be too weedy or messy to retain.

- b. Do you have any TREES you wish to remove? If so, what are the reasons?

20. What are some of your FAVORITE PLANTS? You can attach a separate sheet with a plant list or tear some examples out of magazines etc. Again, think trees and shrubs first, then perennials, bulbs and annuals. The last three are considered the *color* or “filler” from a design perspective. They are the easiest to change or amend later on and are often not as long-lived as larger woody plants. When selecting trees, consider their mature height and spread, and if they would be suitable for your site. Messy leaf drop or seed pods can be a problem close to a patio or the house.

Another issue to consider is hardiness. Most of the Mid-Columbia areas are in USDA Zone 5 to 6, or Sunset Zone 2 to 3.

- a. FAVORITE TREES:

- b. FAVORITE SHRUBS:

- c. FAVORITE PERENNIALS:

- d. FAVORITE ANNUALS, BIENNIALS, BULBS:

Please consider that some plants, especially biennials, reseed vigorously and can be a maintenance issue.

Cont.

e. Which PLANTS do you DISLIKE, if any?

21. What are your favorite plant and flower COLORS?

Do you have colors you do not like? _____

22. Do you like PLANTERS / CONTAINERS? If yes, what type and color?

23. FRAGRANCE is usually a bonus in the garden. Do you have any fragrance you particularly enjoy? _____

Any fragrance you dislike? _____

24. Do you desire a VEGETABLE GARDEN or any FRUIT TREES? If so, how large of a garden or how many fruit trees? Please consider that in Hood River County all fruit trees require a regular spray program to prevent infesting any near-by orchards. Some trees or shrubs act as host plants for codling moth, fire blight or other threats to the Fruit Industry.

Would you like to include herbs?
Edible elements can also be incorporated into the ornamental beds and borders, e.g. Strawberries or Raspberries on a trellis. Blueberries make great ornamental plants. It is fun to be able to sample from you garden when strolling through.

25. What is your FAVORITE SEASON in the garden? Normally the landscape and especially the outdoor rooms experience the most use during the summer.
Many people enjoy cheery early spring color. With our generally beautiful warm falls, autumn leaf and flower color is also a welcome addition, providing a late season finale.

26. Do you have DEER problems? If so, do you intend to install a deer fence?

27. Do you wish to attract BIRDS, hummingbirds, butterflies or other wildlife?

Cont.

28. Do you have PETS? If so, what kind? _____

29. Do you or any family members have any ALLERGIES which would influence the choice of plants? _____

30. MAINTENANCE is a large concern for most people. Some people are able to spend lots of time in their garden. Others would like it to be as low-maintenance as possible.

a. Do you consider yourself an avid, experienced, interested, occasional or non-gardener? _____

b. How much time to you envision yourself being able to spend in your garden per week? Two hours, four hours, ten or more? Naturally, the time necessary to keep up you landscape depends on its size, plants and materials chosen and the desired maintenance level.

31. A large LAWN sets off the home and is a great place to play etc. It can also be very maintenance-intensive if it is to look close to perfect. Grass uses a lot of water during the summer. There are a number of products that have a lesser impact on the environment. You may also be able to tolerate a few weeds and apply less water during the summer once the lawn is established. In general deep waterings 2 to 3 times a week are preferable to watering shortly every day. The lawn will develop a deeper root system and be hardier.

Do you wish to have a substantial lawn? If so, do you intend to do the mowing, fertilizing and other maintenance yourself or hire it out?

32. Our long, warm summers make AUTOMATIC IRRIGATION almost a necessity. The system will enable you to adapt the irrigation easily with the seasons and chose the sprinkler type best suited to the planting. Lawn will need even coverage and usually large pop-up sprinklers are used for it. Planting beds and borders can accommodate lower water use sprinklers. Shrubs, trees and hedges can use water-saving drip irrigation. By preventing irrigation water to cover paths, patios and unplanted areas, water-usage and weed-emergence are reduced, cutting down on maintenance.

An irrigation contractor will be able to give you an estimate showing the cost of the irrigation system based on the design.

What is your SOURCE of irrigation water? _____

How is your water pressure and volume? _____

Do you have an existing irrigation system, which could be adapted?

Would you like additional faucets? Short hoses are much easier to handle.

Cont.

33. Would you like NIGHT LIGHTING? Aside from increasing safety, night lighting also creates atmosphere and makes the garden usable at night. Up-lighting trees with spotlights can add drama and romance. Some timers activate the lights at dusk for a set number of hours, eliminating the need to reset them during the course of the year.

34. Do you plan to include any WATER FEATURES? They add pleasant sound to the garden, can screen out street noise and a quiet water surface mirrors the sky and surrounding plants. However, they are often high-maintenance and need to be winterized unless the water is constantly moving and the water volume is high.

35. SHEDS are a practical addition to the garden for tool and equipment storage, a place for outdoor cushions, toys and other supplies. If a shed is to be custom-built, its features and style can connect and blend with the landscape and residence. Do you wish to include a shed? _____

36. Do you enjoy CARPENTRY AND/OR LANDSCAPE WORK? Do you have the skill level to do some or all of it yourself? Do you have the necessary tools? Many of them can also be rented. _____

37. GARDEN ART, sculpture, birdbaths and bird feeders, pottery/urns all can be incorporated to enhance the garden. Details portray the quality of a garden.
With garden art, whimsical is an option, but the objects should still be well-made and chosen with the landscape style and theme in mind. Sometimes contrast adds a positive, lively element of tension, but repetition is beneficial.

38. What kind of TIMING do you envision for your project? Do you have a deadline you would like to meet? This clearly will be influenced by your budget, the degree of phasing and the contractors' schedules. _____

39. Many of the above elements, materials and type and size of plants chosen will determine the COST of the project. Size of the landscape, topography (need for terracing, retaining walls), soil type, especially extremely rocky soil, will all influence the cost. At this early stage, have you determined a firm BUDGET or budget range for the installation? Regarding the design, we will give you a quote prior to starting any design work. A deposit is usually requested upon acceptance of the design quote. The exact cost of the installation will be presented to you after the design has been completed.

Cont.

40. Do you have a PLOT PLAN of your property or building plans for your house? Providing these will speed up the survey/measuring process. _____

Thank you for taking the time to answer the above questions. Your assistance will greatly aid in developing a custom landscape design just right for you and your site. When you have finished the questionnaire, please return it to us. We can provide you with a copy of it if you wish. We look forward to working with you and creating your very own garden paradise.

Sincerely,

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