



The Psychology of Landscaping

By Arthur Navarrette
Executive Care Landscaping

Welcome to our August edition. This landscape project was especially enjoyable to work on. The clients were great, and we got to know each other well over the two-month job. With such a large yard, my focus was on understanding their priorities. This required listening and asking a series of questions (which I do with all my clients). Once I understood their needs, my job was to guide them through each phase, answering questions and directing the team.

The yard was in disarray, completely overgrown with tree roots. You couldn't step anywhere without encountering roots, which was unsuitable for any new landscape. Additionally, the excessive shade from the trees prevented any plant or lawn from thriving. Our first task was to remove a tree—something I don't enjoy, but sunlight was necessary. Two trees in the center provided most of the shade and root issues. They were planted back-to-back, causing one to dominate and impede the other's growth. Removing the dominant tree, which had the majority of surface roots, solved multiple problems, allowing us to amend the ground without worrying about damaging the remaining tree.

Prioritizing a job this big can be challenging. With all the roots, drainage concerns were inevitable. We needed to install new drains, which in a yard of this size meant several days of hard work—digging and cutting through tree roots. Drainage isn't glamorous, and I've yet to have a client get excited about it or its cost, but it's essential for healthy plant growth. Soggy soil or puddling is detrimental to both lawns and plants.

Next, we moved to the aesthetic aspects, which most clients think of when considering landscaping. The clients were initially uncertain about their yard—it was too much for them. So, I asked questions to understand how they wanted to enjoy it. Did they like being outdoors, doing yard work, or entertaining? Their answers guided me.

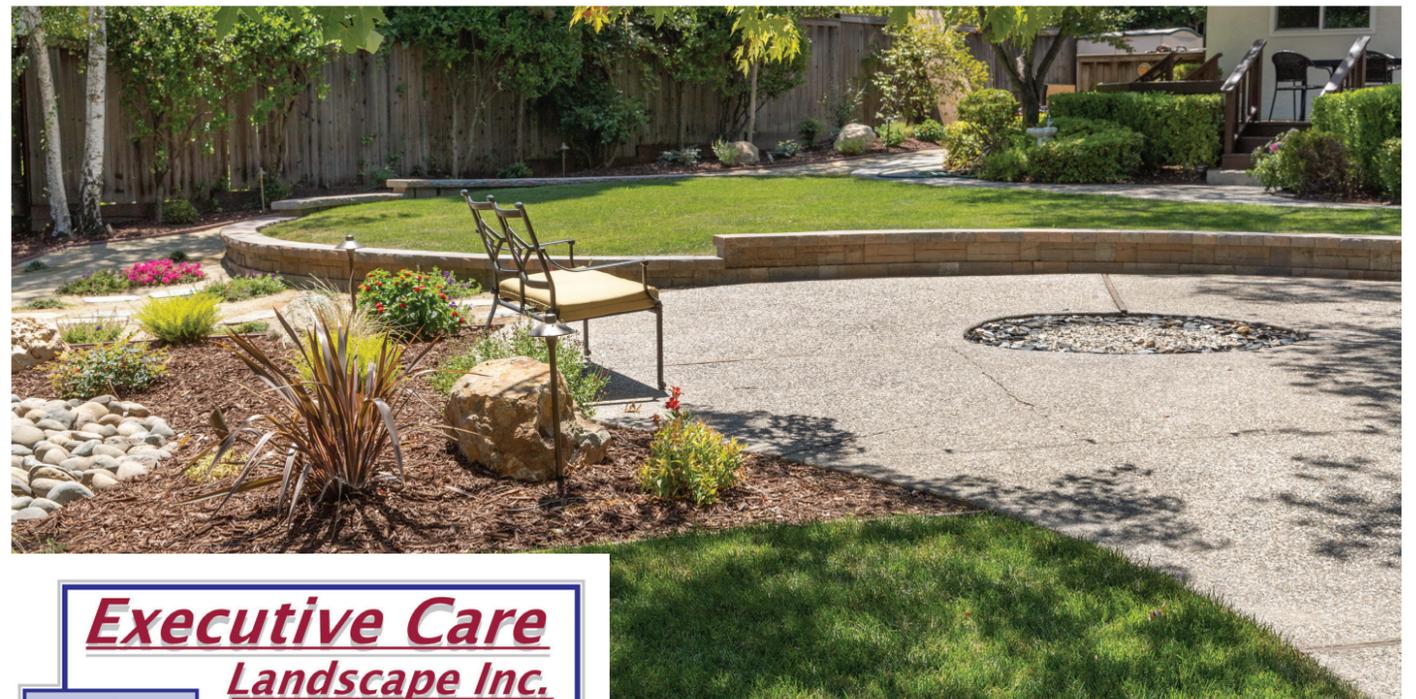
Eileen wanted space to entertain, especially with a backyard wedding for their son in ten weeks (no pressure). She needed a large space for tables but preferred lawn over concrete. However,

the yard's slope made it impossible to place tables even with the roots removed. Therefore, our first priority was creating a level lawn. We built a small block wall to achieve this, and seven days later, it was done. Eileen was thrilled.

Next was Aaron's turn. His priority was a garden, but first, I had to determine whether he was a "farmer" or a hobbyist. More questions followed. His detailed knowledge of preferred crops for both winter and summer indicated he was serious. With this information, we designed a garden he would be proud of. We constructed three raised garden boxes (4' by 8'), one larger box (4' by 10') for spreading vegetables, and a 10' by 3' box for pole beans and climbing vegetables. The fencing that separated the garden from the rest of the yard was heavy wire and 4x4's, allowing for crops to grow there as well. Aaron chose blueberries along the outside of the fence. Lastly, we reserved a corner in the garden for fruit trees. Aaron was thrilled with the results—we exceeded his expectations.

At this point, both ends of the yard were completed, but the center remained open. Once the clients saw how we handled their priorities, they trusted us, which was much appreciated. Initially, Eileen was uncomfortable because I didn't submit plans. I prefer to use marker paint to outline designs directly in the yard—this feels more "real" to me. You don't need to mentally transfer the paper plan to the ground. After watching us in action and seeing the results, she was on board.

The middle portion of the yard had two priorities: inviting you beyond the lawn and creating a pathway to the garden. For the invitation beyond the lawn, we landscaped the side of the yard and around the tree island. We toured Green Acres Roseville for the landscape part. Touring clients and seeing the plants they naturally like helps me understand their personalities better. Some plants are "tight or compact" in their growth, while others are open and relaxed. Knowing my clients' preferences allows me to choose wisely. To get to the garden, I wanted an open and simple pathway. We agreed that low-growing flowering plants with steppingstones for the path, would enhance the natural feel of the yard.



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This process of understanding each client's unique needs helps reduce stress and ensure satisfaction. Each phase furthers the end goal: a beautiful landscape that the clients love and will enjoy for years to come.

We continue landscaping through the summer but hold off on planting when temperatures exceed 100 degrees. Gardeners, fertilize your vegetables for a final harvest.

Until next time, happy gardening! Arthur

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