



Garden Design With Paul Lively From The Lively Landscape Company

BY AMY NORTON

ACCORDING TO THE CALENDAR, SPRING IS HERE, AND LIKE MOST MIDDLE TENNESSEANS, YOU'VE PROBABLY ALREADY BEEN TEASED WITH A FEW WARM MARCH DAYS THAT SIGNAL IMMINENT SEASONAL CHANGE. YOU MAY ALSO BE READING THIS APRIL ISSUE OF *NASHVILLE HOME AND GARDEN* WITH ONE EYE TRAINED ON YOUR BACKYARD THINKING WARM WEATHER GARDENING IS STILL A FARAWAY IDEA, GIVEN THE FROST THAT LINGERS ON THE PROVERBIAL PUMPKIN. AS YOUR THOUGHTS TURN TOWARD ALL OF THE GROUND YOU'LL HAVE TO COVER (PUN INTENDED) TO RECLAIM AN INVITING, COLORFUL LANDSCAPE FROM THE CURRENT WINTER WASTELAND OF YOUR YARD, PANIC NOT! PAUL LIVELY, OF THE LIVELY LANDSCAPE COMPANY, OFFERS HIS THOUGHTS ABOUT PREVAILING TRENDS IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN TO HELP YOUR CREATIVE ENERGY BEGIN THE WINTER THAW, AS WELL.

Q: When is the best time to begin thinking about planting and landscape improvements?

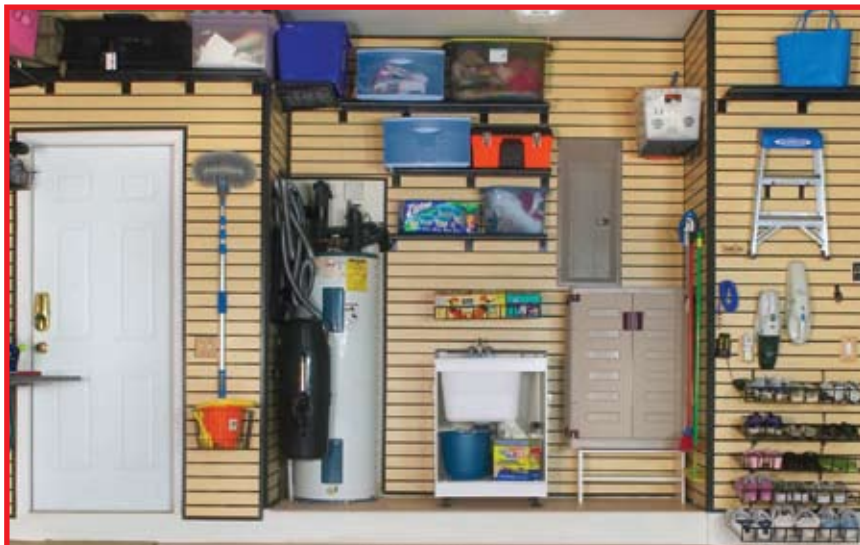
A: It's a popular misconception that spring is the best time to plant. People generally don't want to be outside planting in January, but winter is actually a great time to get new trees and shrubs in the ground, as the plant's energy is concentrated in the root system during this dormant growth time and new plantings have the opportunity to acclimatize while heat and water is not a weather factor. Of course, spring is a great time to plan summer color and think about perennials, window boxes and herb gardens. I encourage new clients to think all year long about what plantings they like as the seasons change.

Q: What services do you offer your clients?

A: We are a design/build company specializing in creative design, installation and project management of landscapes. The Lively Landscape Company merges artistic design services with professional construction to enhance clients' quality of life and add value to their homes. I am closely involved in every aspect of the process from initial design to installation. The oversight and direction I provide to our trained crews ensure that my concepts are carefully translated into reality. The design/build approach allows the client to choose his or her level of involvement in the project, which produces a more creative landscape environment and often saves the client time and money.

Q: What makes the Lively Landscape Company unique, as it relates to design philosophy?

A: In addition to providing the best in customer service, I feel my design philosophies are unique because of my company's core values. It would be easy to simply sell my clients a bunch of shrubs and plantings without rhyme or reason, but I am passionate about landscape design and work hard to understand my clients' needs so I can marry their predilections with design plans that are both relevant and exciting. I take my cues from the architecture of the home and, once inspired, make an in-depth study of the site to make sure my design is not only creative, but appropriate to the style of the residence, as well as the size and elevation of the lot. Landscaping is a natural extension of the architecture which allows for balanced design, and that's what makes for satisfied and enlightened clients.



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Q: How do you differentiate your services among other worthy competitors in the Nashville market?

A: I bring a number of skill sets to the table: I am a trained landscape design professional and understand the big picture as it relates to the architecture of the house. I am, as I have said, passionate about great landscape design, but am equally passionate about proper installation and have a lot of experience with the production end of the business. Because I am involved from start to finish, I am able to tweak and modify the plan to fit the practical constraints of the site while maintaining the integrity of the design. I make sure I provide all my clients with detailed instructions for care and maintenance of their new plantings and am known to drop by years after a project is finished to check in on my gardens and see how things are progressing. I love bringing my dreams to reality through proper planning, great design and solid execution. I also encourage ongoing communication with my clients and want them to call if a newly planted tree appears to have a problem and want to know, also, when gardens are thriving.

Q: Are there popular plantings that especially appeal to you currently?

A: I am happy to see the trend moving away from planting lots of Leyland Cypress and Bradford Pears toward Japanese Cryptomeria, Green Giant Thuja and shade trees such as Chinese Elms, October Glory Maples and Shumard Oaks.



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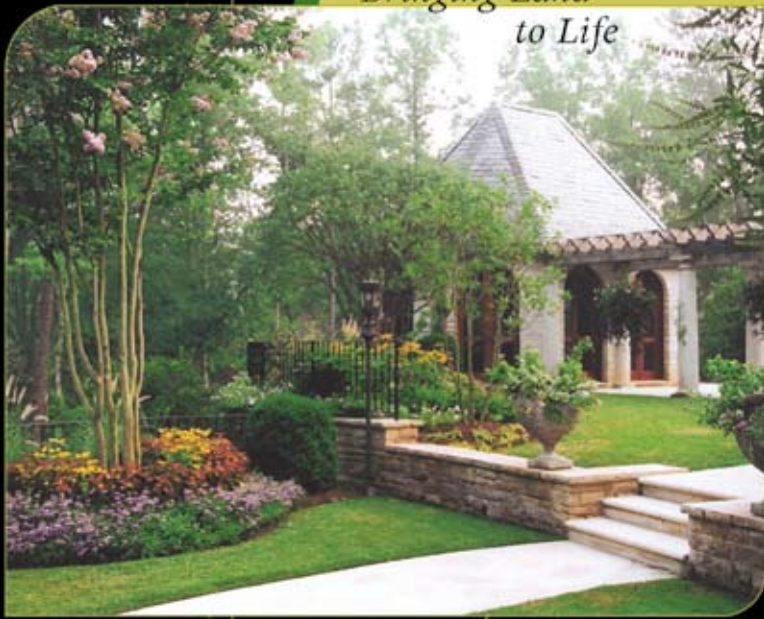


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Q: Are water features taking on new shapes this year?

A: Water is an extremely important element in gardens and can be a really compelling feature of a landscape design plan when it's done right. I've seen plenty of poorly designed water features that amount to little more than a mound of basketball-sized rocks with piped water trickling over in an unnatural manner. Water features that work right are integrated with the site and are natural looking, not contrived. Utilizing a container that sits above ground is a great way to add a water feature to a landscape plan. You can easily transform a large or small container into a water garden, complete with fish, aquatic plants and fountain options, and avoid the pitfalls and expense of leaking liners and complicated maintenance. I also like integrating pools and landscaping into one seamless design. A favorite recent plan of mine involved adding cascading water to pedestal planters along the side of a pool to marry the garden with the pool.

Q: Creating a vacation-like retreat outdoors is a trend that continues to be popular and consistently brings value to the home. What are your suggestions for bringing the indoors, out?

A: There is no doubt that a well-designed landscape plan adds value to your residence and is precisely why our company exists. The Lively Landscape Company's goal is to make outdoor areas more enjoyable and to encourage quality time out of doors. Our designs help increase the intrinsic, personal value, as well as the financial value of the property. That said, outdoor kitchens and fireplaces are still the two most popular additions to outdoor living spaces. Arbors, outdoor lighting, pools or water features and year-round color also lend a destination-feel to the backyard and make our leisure time outside enjoyable.

Q: Why is hardscaping an important consideration in landscape design?

A: Whether it's a walkway, stone wall or patio, hardscaping provides the backbone of a landscape plan. It sets the tone, defines the space and controls the traffic flow in and out of the space. Good hardscape provides garden structure that allows the plants to exist in properly designed beds.

Q: Along those same lines, what materials for walkways, decks and patios are popular now? What are your favorite materials?

A: Interlocking pavers have hit the landscape industry by storm, although very recently they

were deemed too “commercial” looking for residential design. Manufacturers have done a great job offering many options in color, shape and texture for pavers that can be used effectively in driveways, patios, pool decks, walks and wall applications. Although I am partial to natural stone, such as crab orchard and bluestone, these man-made materials are great alternatives when there are budget constraints.

Q: What are your pet peeves with regard to landscape design?

A: I am not a fan of “builder package” landscaping that often accompanies spec home construction. Too often, this type of landscaping results in plantings that don’t thrive or require too much maintenance due to poor placement or insufficient soil preparation. I also prefer to let ornamental shrubs and trees to be more organic and less pruned. Very few shrubs benefit from shearing when occasional deep hand pruning would allow the plants to thrive.

Q: Any resources you can recommend for people in search of inspiration and information?

A: Magazines are a great visual resource for people in the beginning stages of thinking about landscape design. *Fine Gardening* and *Garden Design* are great. In fact, I always encourage new clients to bring photos of designs that appeal, as it helps me get to know their styles and tastes. I also like *The Southern Gardener’s Book of Lists* for plant selection. Local garden centers are great places to go before you buy or work with a designer to see and feel plants in season. Web sites are helpful, too, and I recommend several:

- Davesgarden.com
- Monrovia.com
- Gardenweb.com

Q: Any advice for DIY’ers?

A: The only way to master gardening is by trial and error. Plants are perishable products, and attention should be paid to each selection. Do your homework and learn the soil conditions of your yard. Is your soil dry or wet? What’s the sun and wind exposure? What’s the hardiness zone? (The Nashville area is Zone 6.) Be wary of that beautiful exotic you ran across at the nursery—just because it’s available to purchase doesn’t mean it will work in your garden. Be willing to experiment and have fun with the process. ●



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