

Down to Earth

A SEASONAL NEWSLETTER FROM ELITE LANDSCAPING, INC.

The rewards of fall landscaping efforts are among a property owner's greatest pleasures. Very few events are as joyful as the emergence of the blooms of crocus or hyacinth through the last snows of winter followed in gleeful profusion by daffodils, tulips, azaleas and rhododendron...the lushness of new evergreen growth, the astonishing beauty of forsythia and magnolias.

Professional landscapers encourage fall planting because cooler temperatures and an abundance of rain provide perfect conditions for giving plantings a healthy start. Allowing your new trees and shrubs adequate time to establish strength and vigor prior to enduring the upcoming hot-weather stresses guarantees planting success.

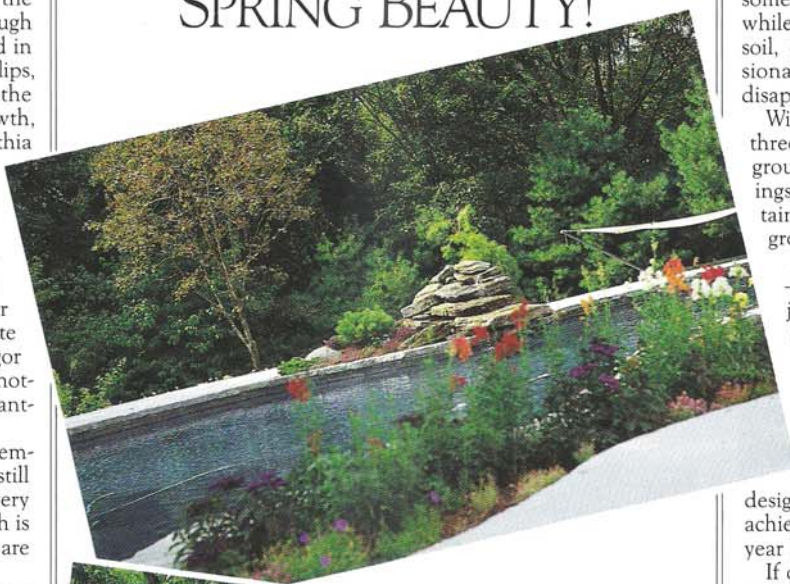
Even as we approach late November and December, planting is still quite safe because soil loses heat very slowly. In most cases, root growth is sustained when soil temperatures are as low as 40° F.

Fall, as well as winter, is the time to attend to pruning dead limbs from neglected trees. For strength and shape, upright suckers that appear at the trunk base or along lower branches of younger trees should be carefully removed using proper tools. Older trees require the removal of deadwood and overgrowth. Allowing dead limbs to remain jeopardizes the health of the entire tree, as it invites the entry of boring insects. Once infested, not only is it difficult to control tree disease, the infestation tends to spread to other valuable trees on one's own property as well as to those of your neighbors.

Fertilization is another important fall activity which affects the general health of your property. Because fertilizer acts as a fortifier of a plant's or tree's immune system, this process aids against disease, parasitic attack, soil deficiencies and assists in injury recovery.

Another extremely important fall precaution involves the professional landscaper's practice of applying anti-desiccants to all evergreens.

LANDSCAPE NOW FOR SPRING BEAUTY!



Two examples of Elite Landscaping's projects are manifestations of the rewards of fall planting. The perennial blooms used as pool decor, as well as Oriental stone fountain and other poolscaping, were planned and executed during the fall after pool installation to eliminate the inconveniences of a muddy, messy spring and subsequent pool season.

The lushness of a healthy front lawn and the privacy attained by bountiful evergreens and bamboo are dependent on a few seasons of acclimatization (fall, winter and spring) before withstanding the hot, dry weather of summer.

Efforts to improve or maintain a lawn of velvet include seeding and sodding during fall months. Because some grasses need sun and moisture, while others tolerate shade or dry soil, it is best to consult a professional landscaper to avoid lawn disappointment.

Wise homeowners use about three inches of mulch to keep the ground warm for delicate plantings. Additionally, mulch maintains moisture and controls weed growth.

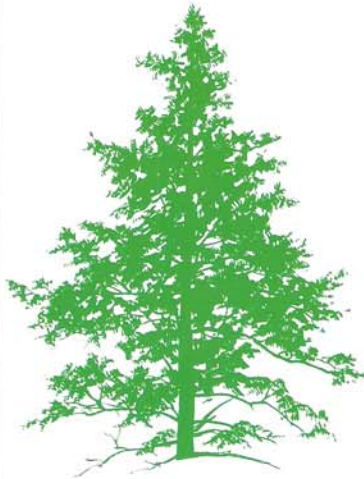
Fall is ideal for planting bulbs — an investment which offers joy and satisfaction for years to come. Intimidating to some amateur gardeners, perennials come in such a wide variety of colors, heights, shapes and bloom times, they boggle the imagination. Consulting a professional landscape design firm is the safest route to achieving a magnificent effect all year long.

If one's property presents certain problems such as erosion, deep shade, an overabundance of wetness, rocks and sharp slopes which defy mowing, ground coverings may be the answer. Pachysandra, ivy, juniper and other ground-hugging shrubs lend year-round color and texture to an otherwise difficult site. Hardy, almost maintenance-free ground covers make wonderful living mulches for rhododendrons, azaleas and other plantings loving moist soil.

When planted in fall, ground covers establish strong roots and quickly spread to carpet quality by spring.

Whether you enjoy the challenge of working to beautify your home's surroundings yourself, or prefer to have professionals do the job, it is effort well spent. Those who allow professionals to establish the original design, find great enjoyment in the minimal maintenance necessary to keep a beautiful homeground.

While some landscapes survive regardless of fall neglect, it is the ones which receive proper care which flourish! Take care this fall.



'HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?'

"Of course, we want the work done ...but how much will it cost?" The answer invariably causes a variety of reactions:

"I can get it done for half that amount!"

"That much?"

"You *must* be joking."

The funny thing is that people let their imaginations run wild, but expect the extraordinary at an ordinary price. Let's look at what the price of a landscape project includes:

1. *Design and consultation*
2. *Drawings, blueprints, etc.*
3. *Equipment needed*
(backhoes, bulldozers, trucks, etc.)
4. *Materials needed*
(stone, soil, lumber, fertilizer, electrical fixtures, steel beams, etc.)
5. *Plants, shrubs, bulbs, etc.*
6. *Implementation by educated, articulate professional staff*

The installation of a landscape project may take a few days, a few weeks or as long as a few months. What can help homeowners to better afford high quality landscaping is *phasing*.

Phasing means breaking down a grand scheme into smaller, more affordable segments. In such a way, homeowners can see progress and rewarding changes without having to overextend themselves. This approach to landscaping actually can work to the advantage of the grand plan, in that certain strategic plantings can have a headstart at establishing themselves before the finishing touches are implemented.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF ELITE LANDSCAPING

It gives us great pleasure to introduce Down-to-Earth, our newest publication. Designed to provide information and guidelines for achieving landscape excellence, as well as to express our interest in bearing from you, this newsletter has been prepared especially for those appreciative of the finer things in life.

We at Elite Landscaping owe our dramatic company growth to a very special clientele — people who find joy in coming home to a private paradise, a world of exotic greenery and the colors of the rainbow: people who take pride in a handcrafted deck, a stone stairway or a glistening fountain. Unique individuals, our clients are people who aren't afraid to dream.

It is rewarding, indeed, to have contributed to the joy in your lives. For ours is a business of life and growth, where every job is a labor of love.

Realistically speaking, no one really needs landscaping, just as no one needs a beautiful car or an exotic vacation. But, such things provide personal pride, a sense of achievement and real satisfaction. Long after the car has been sold and the vacation forgotten, the landscape investment lives on... more beautiful and more precious with time. How can one measure the feelings attached to the maturing of a young sapling into a proud healthy tree, offering its vitality in exchange for your care?

The entire staff of Elite Landscaping cordially invites to you to share your ideas with us via our newsletter questionnaire, and warmly thanks you for your continued interest in our work.

If we haven't done so already, may we someday fulfill a dream for you!

David B. Katz
President

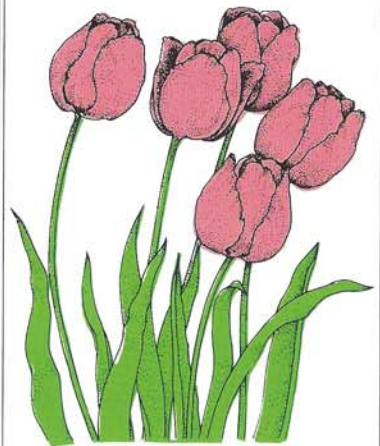
ALL DECKED OUT!



What is the difference between a deck built by a traditional carpenter and a deck built by a high quality landscape design firm?

First and foremost, the landscape firm is highly conscious of architectural design, proposing plans which complement rather than compete. With a keen awareness of visual particulars, the landscape design firm builds with minimal jointing and grains facing the proper direction to avoid *cupping* or warping. Handsomely designed rails, steps, seating and planters accompany the quality deck as well. For an unusually fine statement, the quality deck is conscientiously sanded to eliminate labeling and rough spots, and cured temporarily before being stained or finished. Finally, the landscape design firm is concerned not just with the deck as a singular element but whether it performs successfully as a leisure center in conjunction with both the home and the yard.

Above: An Elite Landscaping deck and landscape design perched dramatically above sloping property use curves softened by year-round greenery for a voluptuous perspective.



WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE

What does it take to keep your indoor plants alive and beautiful? Water, water and more water. But, there's a secret to how much water a plant actually needs. Certain guidelines may help you better understand your plants' needs.

Inside air, especially in the colder months of the year will be drier due to closed windows and heating units. Critical to a plant's need for water is the type of container it is in. Popular examples include traditional greenhouse clay pots, plastic pots, glazed ceramic pots, dish gardens, etc.

Plants in clay pots need water more often than those in plastic ones. The more porous clay pots allow moisture to evaporate through the sides of the pot as well as from the surface. Since plastic pots are not porous, they retain more moisture.

Plants in glazed ceramic pots require less water than others, since most don't have drainage holes. Such plants need more careful watering since you must avoid collecting excess water at the base of the pot where it can cause damage to the roots. To avoid overwatering in this situation, cover the bottom portion of the ceramic pot with one-to-two inches of coarse sand or gravel.

In addition to the type of pot used, many other factors affect your watering schedule including room temperature, light and humidity.

If you are unsure about when to water indoor plants, this good rule of thumb should be followed: Water plants when the soil feels dry 3" below the surface, and never let foliage get to the point of wilting.

A PICTURE WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

You're just about ready to sign the landscape contract. You've agreed on a price and you've broken the project into affordable phases. You know what you want. And you believe your landscape designer has every intention of giving it to you. If only you could see how everything will look *now*, so you can be sure of no surprises.

— Before —



— After —



The above before and after shots of a home in need of landscaping were created by using a state-of-the-art computer process which allows the landscape designer to show his plan to the homeowner on videotape in any stage of development prior to breaking ground.

Elite Landscaping, through the wonders of modern technology, makes it now possible to see your home completely landscaped in full color exactly as your landscape designer has planned. With the help of an excellent computerized tool, your Elite designer can digitally photograph your home and property, alter that image on a high resolution computer screen to represent any stage of the planned landscape's maturity, and then transmit it for your viewing pleasure on videotape. If you've received another landscape firm's design, that also can be input and projected to compare with Elite's plan. Both before and after images can be seen, so you can get a real sense of the end result.



Above: A wonderful example of how landscape phasing has allowed this poolscape to be augmented in stages, year after year. Elite Landscaping began with simple planting areas to adorn the natural stone pool. In a subsequent season, the patio and more planting was achieved. In a more recent stage, stone holding walls, steps and additional planting and lawn work completed the estate quality of this setting.

DON'T WAIT TO LANDSCAPE YOUR NEW POOL

With more and more homes installing inground swimming pools, there has been an increased need for pool landscaping or *poolscaping*. What most homeowners fail to realize is that after pool installation, it is not necessary to wait a period of months or seasons for the land to settle before proceeding with finishing. With the availability of mechanical compactors, it is possible to firmly tamp down loose soil to its original state so that landscaping, patio and deck work can commence. In this way, the time when the yard is in turmoil is greatly reduced, allowing families to enjoy the use of their new pool soon after installation without the inconvenience of avoiding mud, rough terrain and exposed equipment.

When planning the poolscape, important considerations include family lifestyle, property size, and topographical characteristics, or more simply put, the "lay of the land."

A variety of finishing techniques can be applied to extend the pool environment. A series of decks made of pressure-treated lumber, cedar or redwood can provide ample space for lounging, dining and entertaining. If you prefer using slate, brick, bluestone or fieldstone, an almost eternally resilient surface can be installed.

If space and topography allow, planting areas in close proximity to the pool area serve to naturalize the "man-made" body of water, including dwarf shrubs, ornamental specimens, and bulbs, to name a few.

Depending on the situation, railings, fencing, holding walls, seating, stairways and privacy screens are other options which add to the luxury of the environment. Additionally, gazebos, outdoor lighting and a variety of fountains can be included for special effects.

NOW IS THE TIME...

- To mulch over perennials by mid-to-late November.
- To plant spring bulbs by end of November.
- To fertilize plantings after leaves begin to drop until Dec. 1st.
- To plant most shrubs and trees until mid-December. Be sure to "wilt-pruf."
- To prune now through next April except Rhododendron, Azaleas and Forsythia.
- To winterize sprinkler/irrigation systems by Nov. 15th.
- To apply anti-desiccants to protect broadleaved evergreens and new plantings.
- To plan, design and budget fall and winter decking, masonry, walk, wall, and lighting projects.

HOW TO REACH HIGHER GROUND

Working with a sloped piece of property is a challenge every landscape designer relishes. To begin with, homeowners generally believe that a slope must have a retaining wall. If desired, that certainly is an option. But there are other alternatives which may prove to be more harmonious and possibly less expensive.



A stone path which leads to gently curving stone steps demonstrates Elite Landscaping's naturalistic approach to slope control. A generous planting of creeping ground coverings achieves year-round cosmetic softening while preventing soil erosion.

Depending on the availability of sun and shade, a variety of ground coverings can be used in context with stonework, such as periwinkle, also known as *myrtle* or *vinca*, holly, ivy, pachysandra, creeping phlox and many others. At various times during the year, such ground coverings blossom to offer added color and contrast against the muted greys of stone used.

If a low-growing evergreen is planted, the path will retain greenery all year long, though somewhat diminished in intensity of color in winter. When planted in fall, ground coverings have ample time to establish strong roots, generously spreading by the time summer arrives.

THE DRAMA OF OUTDOOR LIGHTING

It has been said that more than 85% of the information we receive through our senses comes to us through our sight. That information, transmitted by the intensity and color of light, may make us feel calm or excited, cheerful or melancholy, secure or apprehensive.

Landscape lighting, more than providing us with necessary sight, can illuminate the beauty of the colors and textures of your landscape which make your property enjoyable during daylight hours. Offering both glare-free washes of light as well as focused spotlighting, fixtures can be hidden beneath handrails, or behind fascias, or you can select from a wide variety of beautiful styles which can be mounted on their own stems. Small areas can be made to appear large, while large areas can look cozy and inviting. Uplighting and downlighting can cast dramatic shadows of fluttering foliage, while backlighting can silhouette the exotic shapes of attractive plantings. Limited only by the imagination, landscape lighting can make a significant difference in the appeal and accessibility of your property.

ON THE HORIZON

BOOKS WE RECOMMEND

The following books are available at better home centers and book stores.

Taylor Guides

Norman Taylor, *Ground Covers, Vines and Grasses, Roses, Shrubs, Perennials, Garden Design, Annuals, Bulbs, Vegetables and Herbs, Houseplants, Trees*. Based on *Taylor's Encyclopedia of Gardening*, Houghton Mifflin Co.

How To Design and Install Outdoor Lighting

William H.W. Wilson, Ortho Books.

How to Design and Build Decks & Patios

Lin Cotton and T. Jeff Williams, Ortho Books

Reader's Digest Illustrated Guide to Gardening

Carroll C. Calkins, Ed., Reader's Digest Association



Nightscaping* is a 12-volt outdoor lighting system which can enhance your landscape through uplighting, downlighting, backlighting, pathlighting and underwater techniques.

GIVE AND TAKE

DREAM A LITTLE

The following questionnaire may provoke some thinking on your part. But, if you take the time to answer our questionnaire, someone from Elite will be able to assist you in formulating a plan and giving you an estimate. There is no obligation. We simply are interested in learning your interests in landscaping and thank you in advance for your time and effort. Please fill out the form below or you may photocopy the form first so you are able to retain the complete newsletter for later reference. Then fax or mail your form in an envelope to:

ELITE LANDSCAPING & PLANTCARE CO.
A Division of Elite Landscaping, Inc.
RR 6 ROBINSON LANE
WAPPINGERS FALLS, N.Y. 12590
914-226-1216
914-226-1367 FAX

- Would you like to find out the cost of landscaping improvements for your property? Yes No
- Does your property include such characteristics as:
 Rocky Slopes Pond/Lake/Stream Pool Woods
- Do you desire more privacy from neighbors, road? Yes No
- Do you want poolscaping in particular? Yes No
- Do you need easier access to parts of your property? Yes No
- Do you feel the need for a deck;
an addition to an existing deck? Yes No
- Have you dreamed of a fountain or lily pond? Yes No
- Would you enjoy flowers as part of the landscape? Yes No
- Do you have problems such as erosion;
Improper water drainage? Yes No
- Do you want enhancement or security lighting on your property? Yes No
- Are you unhappy with the condition of your trees? Yes No
- Do you need help with a better system of watering your property? Yes No
- Are you proud of your home's first impression and front entrance? Yes No
- Are you proud of your lawn? Yes No

COMMENTS _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

PHONE _____ BEST TIME TO CALL _____

THE TALENT BEHIND THE SCENES

As *Elite Landscaping* grows and expands, so do the many tasks involved with management and administration. Although many of our clients have praised the eloquence and creativity of our field staff, there are key staff members at Elite who seldom leave the office. Through their perseverance and dedication, however, Elite has been transformed from a small, nuts and bolts company to a high-tech, computerized conglomerate.

Rhoda Katz, Office Administrator, left her early career as secretary/bookkeeper to raise a family of four. With that brilliantly accomplished, Rhoda re-entered the business world as a part-time teller at National Bank of Westchester. Ambitious and competent, Rhoda was promptly promoted to various positions of responsibility including Head Teller in charge of all branches, Customer Representative, Control Officer in charge of branch security, and Assistant Branch Manager. With Elite Landscaping in its infancy, Rhoda left her banking career to offer her son's business expertise in accounting, customer relations and office management.

Recently, Rhoda has guided the integration of the IBM 80 Mainframe and four terminals, converting all files and record-keeping procedures to comply with the 56 networked programs that were written for Elite. While overseeing all of Elite's office operations, this has been a task of mammoth proportions. One of the "voices" at Elite, Rhoda is to be commended on a job well done!

D.L. Johnson, General Manager, is responsible for a wide variety of tasks, many of which emerge unpredictably. Conducting business from before 6:30 a.m. daily, he assigns crews, coordinates equipment, approves purchases and instructs supervisors. Daily project reports completed by all employees must be checked before computer input can begin. Sitework review must occur daily in order to check availability of supplies and equipment while critical planning determines the successful progress of all work contracted. With seventeen years of management experience to draw from, "D.L." also oversees vehicle maintenance, physical plant operations, nursery stock, scheduling, interviewing and hiring, customer contact and follow-up, general administration, public relations and safety training. Finally, Elite thanks "D.L." for his diligently performed photography shown in this issue.